

# Safe Return to In-person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan Addendum Guidance 2023

LEAs are required to update the Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan every six months through **Sept. 30, 2023**. Each time, local education agencies (LEAs) must seek public input on the plan and any revisions and must take such input into account. The purpose of the plan is to keep stakeholders informed.

Every LEA should complete the addendum and upload it to ePlan in the LEA document library and post it to the LEA's website (**March 1 and Sept. 15**). Like the development of the plan, all revisions must be informed by community input and reviewed and approved by the governing body prior to posting on the LEA's publicly available website.

Please consider the following when completing the addendum:

- Ensure the LEA used multiple models of engagement offered to stakeholders. Examples may include surveys, in-person or virtual committee meetings, town hall meetings, or other inclusive engagement opportunities.
- LEAs should engage all applicable groups noted in meaningful consultation during the crafting of the plan and when making any significant revisions or updates to the plan.
- The number of stakeholders engaged should represent the composition of students. For example, if students with disabilities make up 15 percent of students, then 10-20 percent of respondents should represent this subgroup.
- Ensure the stakeholder engagement happened prior to the development/revision of the plan.
- The LEA must engage the health department in the development and revision of the plan. This is different from providing the health department with COVID-19 numbers.
- Plans must explicitly address every bullet point in Question 3 regarding district policies and strategies.
- Plans require local board approval and public posting.
- LEAs must update the *Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan* at least every six months through Sept. 30, 2023, seek public input on the plan and any revisions, and take such input into account. All revisions must include an explanation and rationale of why the revisions were made.
- All revisions must include an explanation and rationale, with meaningful public consultation and in an understandable format. The American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act requires LEAs to post their Health and Safety Plans online in a language that parents/caregivers can understand, or, if it is not practicable to provide written translations to an individual with limited English proficiency, be orally translated. The plan also must be provided in an alternative format accessible, upon request, by a parent who is an individual with a disability as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act.

## Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan Addendum

The Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief 3.0 (ESSER 3.0) Fund under the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act of 2021, Public Law 117-2, was enacted on March 11, 2021. Funding provided to states and local educational agencies (LEAs) helps safely reopen and sustain the safe operation of schools and address the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the nation's students.

In the fall of 2021, LEAs developed and made publicly available a Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan. All plans were developed with meaningful public consultation with stakeholder groups. LEAs are required to update the plan every six months through Sept. 30, 2023, and must seek public input on the plan and any revisions and must take such input into account. LEAs also must review and update their plans and ensure they align with any significant changes to CDC recommendations for K-12 schools. Like the development of the plan, all revisions must be informed by community input and reviewed and approved by the governing body prior to posting on the LEA's publicly available website.

The following information is intended to update stakeholders and address the requirement.

LEA Name:

Date: 9/1/2023

### 1. Describe how the LEA has continued to engage in meaningful consultation with stakeholders in the development of the revised plan.

Rhea County Department of Education has continued with ongoing conversations and gathered stakeholder input through several different methods of interaction. These different methods of gathering stakeholder input has included surveying parents/guardians, school principals, teachers, and various additional staff members throughout the district. All surveys are tabulated by district staff members and shared with anyone requesting to know the survey results. The district staff disseminates the survey results and comments that were written in and relays the information to the Director of Schools. Input that would make positive impacts on our district and the health crisis that we are recovering from have been used to revise Rhea County's plan. The monthly Rhea County School Board meetings also provide opportunities for public input regarding the new year school plans. The platform for public input at the monthly meetings are open to anyone in the community which would include business owners, students, parents, etc. As the information from stakeholders is collected, it is used in regular district discussions to drive the planning to address the current school year and help to mold future plans. Additionally, the district plan for re-opening for will continue to be made available in English and Spanish through the district website, Facebook, Twitter, and the local newspaper. Parents are always encouraged to notify the Rhea County Schools District office if they needed help in understanding the new protocols for school or if they need clarification. The district website provides contact information for anyone needing help in processing through the school plans. The communication with stakeholders has been ongoing from the initial planning for the opening of Rhea County Schools. Rhea County feels that our stakeholders opinions are valuable and crucial in giving our students the best possible educational experience. Rhea County has received ongoing, continual feedback from stakeholders through emails, phone calls meetings, and surveys.

**2. Describe how the LEA engaged the health department in the development of the revised plan.**

Rhea County Schools and the Rhea County Health Department have regular, meaningful conversations weekly by phone and/or in person. The conversations revolve around how best to respond to the current COVID conditions and how to best keep our students and staff safe. The conversations also include putting measures in place to effectively respond to future outbreaks.

**3. Provide the extent to which the LEA has updated adopted policies and a description of any such policies on each of the following health and safety strategies.**

<i>Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to health and safety policies</i>
Rhea County has continued with disinfecting and social distancing in our classrooms, particularly with our students that could be at a higher risk when they contract viruses such as COVID. Thus our health and safety policies for our children with disabilities provides for additional safety measures to keep these students safe. We have been very intentional in disinfecting and social distancing. Our SPED Coordinators have had ongoing conversations with the guardians of the these students and are ready and willing to adjust the protocol if needed. We are in the process of building one new CDC classroom which can help to provide appropriate accommodations and address the health and safety of the students with significant disabilities. The new CDC classroom is now open and functioning at Spring City. These students will now be under a protocol that will provide the greatest likelihood of preventing the students from getting sick.
<i>Physical distancing (e.g., use of cohorts/podding)</i>
Rhea County continues to encourage physical distancing between individuals with the hopes of preventing the spread of the COVID virus or at the very least keep the positive cases to a minimum. Rhea County is in ongoing conversations with our local Health Department and our stakeholders to make necessary adjustments when needed.
<i>Hand washing and respiratory etiquette</i>
Rhea County is making hand washing and respiratory etiquette a priority. The protocol will be changed if during our conversations with Rhea County Health Department and our stakeholders indicate that a change is needed. Communication is encouraged by phone, email, monthly meetings, and surveys.
<i>Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities including improving ventilation</i>
Schools will continue to be sanitized with the intent of reducing the opportunities of spreading COVID. Our custodians continue the practice of keeping sanitation of the schools at the top of their list of tasks that must be completed. School bus drivers are sanitizing their buses daily. Hand disinfectant continues to be located in all facilities. Further changes will be make upon the recommendation of our Health Department and our stakeholders.
<i>Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine</i>
The Rhea County Health Department is conducting all contact tracing and Rhea County School District is following all recommendations for contract tracing. Rhea County school district is following the CDC guidelines for isolation and quarantine.
<i>Diagnostic and screening testing</i>
Rhea County recently received a grant that would allow for us to test for COVID in the schools. We are currently operating under the implementation of the testing in schools.
<i>Efforts to provide vaccinations to educators, other staff, and students, if eligible</i>
Rhea County did provide times during the school day for our educators to be vaccinated at our local health department. We have not provided any student vaccinations due to a lack of stakeholder support.
<i>Universal and correct wearing of masks</i>
Rhea County has not changed the recommendation of mask wearing. We have not shifted to a stricter view due to the vast majority of our stakeholders indicating that mandatory mask wearing is not what they want.

**4. Provide a current description as to how the LEA is ensuring continuity of services including but not limited to services that address students' academic needs and students' and staff's social, emotional, mental health, and other needs, which may include student health and food services.**

Rhea County is continuing to conduct school in the traditional sense with the students and staff reporting to school for in-person learning. We feel that it is in the student's best interest to be at school to address their academic needs and to keep a close watch on their mental health. Students that are absent due to quarantine or absent due to illness will be given the opportunity to continue their school work through Google Classroom. In regards to mental health, we feel that mental health issues are much easier to detect and assist with when personal relationships are made with the school personnel. It is very difficult to detect a student with a mental health crisis virtually. Therefore, we are striving to stay in school. The students that are struggling with depression or anxiety can see a representative from Behavioral Health or spending some time with the behaviorist on staff.