June 15, 2020

To   Superintendents
                 Chief Business Officials
                 Maintenance & Operations Directors

From: Safety and Loss Control staff
                 SISC Property & Liability Division

SUBJECT: COVID-19 and school re-openings

The COVID-19 Corona virus has had a profound impact on our nation, communities, schools and each individually.   As member districts prepare to provide instruction in the fall, SISC is providing information for consideration.

A number of resources were used to development this memorandum.   The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has issued Guiding Principles for Schools to use in consideration of re-opening their campuses. CalOSHA has also provided Interim General Guidelines for Protecting Workers from COVID-19.   The California Department of Public Health and Department of Education also have information available to districts working through this process. The California Department of Public Health released guidelines for schools on June 5, 2020. The California Department of Education released guidelines on June 8, 2020. We encourage you to visit these websites for additional information and updates, as more is learned about this virus.

Experts agree the most common mode of transmission is through person to person contact, by way of respiratory droplets.   Current information suggests contact with a contaminated surface is secondary. Preventive measures such as staying home when ill; covering coughs and sneezes with tissue; and proper hand washing will be critical to reducing the infection rates on campus.

Decisions on the re-opening of school should be made in consultation with your county department of health and county office of education and your legal counsel. Data on testing, infection rates and hospital capacity will drive many of the decisions about how instructional services are delivered when school resumes.

Some areas for consideration and/or adjustments are offered below:

<u>Health Screenings</u>

- Provide information to staff, parents/guardians and students about the signs and symptoms of COVID-19. If an individual is symptomatic or has been exposed to a known or suspected infected individual, they should stay home.
- What type of screening and/or personal protective equipment is recommended by your County Department of Health? Districts may need to plan ahead with screening questionnaires, thermometers, masks, gloves, etc. Some of these items may be accessible through the California Office of Emergency Services and the California Department of Public Health.

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A Joint Powers Authority administered by the Kern County Superintendent of Schools Office, Mary C. Barlow, Superintendent

School Schedules

- Can the school/district stagger the start and stop time of school?
- Is varying days of in-person and virtual instruction an option?
- How will a staggered schedule impact transportation services your district provides and the possible work schedule of parents?
- Keep student and staff groupings or cohorts, as static as possible.   Middle, junior high and high school classes may consider staff member rotation with student remaining in one area for the day.

Facilities

- Can the school establish one gate for entrance and an alternate gate for exit?
- Consider signage needs for drop-off/pick-up, signs of disease, use of personal protective equipment (PPE) etc.
- What interventions are needed to promote physical distancing? (Visual cues such as tape on sidewalk in areas to line up, restricting playground activities that reduce physical distancing, serving of meals in classrooms, outdoor or staggered lunches, physical education class adjustments, etc.)
- Remove desks or assign alternating desks to students that allow for appropriate physical distancing.   If tables are used, students should all face one direction rather than each other.
- Reduce the sharing of classroom materials.   This may include pencils, books, staplers, tablets, art supplies, games etc. If that is not possible, identify ways to disinfect items between users.
- Consider the set-up of classrooms to reduce the number of potential contaminant surfaces and items that may need cleaning. Reducing the amount of porous materials such as rugs, stuffed animals or soft surface furniture will also facilitate the cleanliness of the classroom.
- Minimize congregate movement through hallways as much as practicable.
- Check to ensure the ventilation system is operating properly and allows for appropriate exchange of fresh air.   Replace and check air filters and filtration systems to ensure optimal air quality.
- When physical distancing is difficult, consider where physical barriers may be appropriate.   Are sneeze guards or partitions needed in the front office, food service area, between bathroom sinks etc.
- Encourage students to bring their own meals and water bottles when feasible.
- Identify ways to provide individually plated or bagged meals. If re-usable food service items (utensils, dishes etc.) are used, establish strict protocols and PPE for staff protection when handling these items.
- Establish more frequent and enhanced routines for cleaning and disinfecting of campuses.   As a reminder, the Healthy Schools Act requires any adult on campus using an antimicrobial product (including Clorox wipes, Lysol wipes or any other brand) to complete an annual training.   These products must also be kept out of the reach of children.
- Select cleaning products approved for use against COVID-19 and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approved list N.   Work with your district's Integrated Pest Management coordinator.
- Ethyl alcohol-based hand sanitizers are preferred over Isopropyl hand sanitizers which are more toxic and can be absorbed through the skin.
- Establish a procedure and area for individuals who become ill or symptomatic while on campus. Work with your district administration and legal counsel on maintaining privacy rights and what information should be communicated to staff and parents/guardians.
- Use cubbies, containers or other designated spaces to keep student belongings separated and encourage them to be taken home each day.

Transportation

- Determine feasibility of students sitting every other row, additional bus runs or use of smaller buses.
- What is the bus driver or bus aide's role in health screens and the process if a student is not feeling well?
- Establishing enhanced guidelines for student drop-off, screenings etc. Consider this may increase the amount of vehicle traffic during drop-off and pick-up times.
- Buses should be cleaned and disinfected daily and after transporting any individual who is exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19.

Other Considerations

- Consider the needs of students and staff members who are medically fragile, have underlying conditions or compromised immune systems. Work with your legal counsel to comply with all personnel requirements.
- Identify students who may need additional accommodations and prepare for the needs of individuals who may not be able to communicate symptoms of illness; have limited mobility; or require close contact or support from others.
- Designate a staff liaison for responding to COVID-19 concerns.
- Develop a plan in the event closure of class or school is required.
- Prevent discrimination against students and/or staff (or have family members) who are diagnosed with COVID-19.
- Keep documentation of possible exposures and work with local public health office on positive cases, while maintaining confidentially under FERPA and HIPPA rules.

Current data indicates over 100,000 U.S. citizens and over 4,500 California residents have died from the COVID-19 virus, with infections nearing two million. It is therefore likely that students and staff members may have been affected by this virus, either directly or indirectly. Districts should be prepared to deal with the emotional issues and concerns students and staff members may have. Communication avenues should be established to share the availability of school counselors, hotlines and other local resources to assist individuals dealing with emotional or mental health issues.

Additional Resources for Information

Centers for Disease Control
https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/schools.html

CalOSHA
https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/coronavirus/General-Industry.html

California Department of Public Health, Interim Guidelines for Schools
https://covid19.ca.gov/industry-guidance/#top

California Department of Education
https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/he/hn/coronavirus.asp

Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) Technical Assistance Center
https://rems.ed.gov/coronavirus

National Council of School Facilities
https://www.facilitiescouncil.org/covid19-general-guidance

Stop the Spread of Germs

Help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases like COVID-19.

6 ft

Stay at least 6 feet (about 2 arms' length) from other people.

Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash and wash your hands.

When in public, wear a cloth face covering over your nose and mouth.

Do not touch your eyes, nose, and mouth.

Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.