



# Department of Public Health

## MAYOR

Dee Margo

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### District 1

Peter Svarzbein

### District 2

Alexandra Anello

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Cassandra Hernandez

### District 4

Dr. Sam Morgan

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## CITY MANAGER

Tommy Gonzalez

## Guidance for Return to School - Fall 2020

The situation regarding COVID-19 in El Paso, Texas is continuously evolving and with the presence of community spread of COVID-19 in our community, the City of El Paso Department of Public Health's (DPH) Local Health Authority is issuing the following Orders and Guidance that must be followed to reduce the risk of exposure to and infection with COVID-19, as well as the protective measures which must be undertaken at parades and other outdoor activities in El Paso County with the aim of protecting the health and well-being of all residents.

Transmission of coronavirus in general occurs much more commonly through respiratory droplets than through contact with contaminated surfaces, but it is possible to get infected if one touches a contaminated surface and then touches their nose, eyes, or mouth. The risk of transmission appears to be proportional to the closeness and frequency of interaction between an infected individual and others who are not infected.

First presumptive positive case in El Paso was reported on March 13, 2020. With initial case, several actions took place and schools were the first of the stakeholders to have directives aimed at protecting staff and students. As Opening Texas plans advance and the community spread of COVID-19 continues in our community, preventive measures are necessary to slow down the spread of the virus.

The following are public health recommendations for school districts in El Paso area as they prepare to open:

### Social Distancing and Other Public Health Interventions

- Students may return to school as per school districts plans.
- All children with special healthcare needs that are considered medically fragile should not return to school until the 2021-2022 school year.
- Students, teachers, and staff age 2 Yrs. and older should wear face coverings, unless medically contraindicated or if this may pose a risk to the student, teachers and staff.
- Students should have temperature check at the beginning of the day, before classes begins, in the classroom or before entering the building. Any student with temperature of 100 F or greater will be sent home.

**Angela Mora – Interim Public Health Director**

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- Do not allow students with new or worsening signs and symptoms, as listed below, to return to school until:
  - In the case of any student who was diagnosed with COVID-19, the student may return to school when all three of the following criteria are met: No fever without the use of fever-reducing medications for at least 3 days (72 hours); **AND**
  - The student has significant improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath); **AND**
  - At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared; **or**
  - In the case of a student who has symptoms that could be COVID-19 and does not get evaluated by a medical professional or tested for COVID-19, the individual is assumed to have COVID-19, and the student may not return to school until the individual has completed the same three-step criteria listed above; **or**
  - If the student has symptoms that could be COVID-19 and wants to return to school before completing the above self-isolation period, the individual must obtain a medical professional’s note clearing the individual for return based on an alternative diagnosis.
- Arrange classroom seating to promote social distancing between students of at least 6-Ft. apart, when feasible.
- School officials should ensure that student and teachers remain in the same classroom (all day for young children kindergarten and elementary schools).
- School officials should limit mixing or exchange of students between groups as much as possible.
- Limit close face-to-face contact between students upon arrival and departure from school as much as possible. School officials may consider stagger arrival and departure times and locations by cohort groups of students. Other acceptable protocols may be considered.
- Educate staff, teachers, and families regarding when they or their children should stay home and when they can return to school.
- Common use or shared areas such as dining halls, cafeterias, and breakrooms should follow social distancing and restaurant rules as set forth by the governor and DPH.

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- Have children bring their own meals (if feasible) or serve individual meals in the classroom instead of dining hall or cafeteria.
- Use disposable food serving items (e.g., utensils, dishes).
- All travel restrictions are lifted in El Paso county, staff and students may travel out of the region; however, they should observe all preventive measures and recommendations (social distancing, wearing face covering, washing hands often) while traveling and upon return.
- Educate students, staff, teachers and volunteers about COVID-19 and how to prevent infection such as: proper hand wash, not touching face, social distancing, cough etiquette, etc.
- Each school should report daily absenteeism due to Influenza-like illness (ILI) to their school district and each school district should report a daily spreadsheet of the school absenteeism due to ILI to the DPH.

**Staff**

- School officials must adopt and implement a health screening policy for all staff and volunteers, and establish protocols for staff, teacher or volunteer exclusion if they develop any of the following symptoms:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Cough	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sore throat
<input type="checkbox"/>	Repeated shaking with chills	<input type="checkbox"/>	Loss of taste or smell
<input type="checkbox"/>	Chills	<input type="checkbox"/>	Diarrhea
<input type="checkbox"/>	Muscle pain	<input type="checkbox"/>	Headache
<input type="checkbox"/>	Feeling feverish or a measured temperature greater than or equal to 100.0 degrees Fahrenheit	<input type="checkbox"/>	Known close contact with a person who is lab confirmed to have COVID-19
<input type="checkbox"/>	Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing		

- School Officials should consider using a touchless infrared thermometer to check the temperature of staff, teachers and volunteers each day.

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- Staff, teachers or volunteers with a temperature above 100°F or with any of the above symptoms are recommended to be sent home.
- Do not allow staff, teachers or volunteers with new or worsening signs or symptoms as listed above to return to work until:
  - In the case of an staff, teacher or volunteer who was diagnosed with COVID-19, the individual may return to work when all three of the following criteria are met: No fever without the use of fever-reducing medications for at least 3 days (72 hours); **AND**
  - The individual has significant improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath); **AND**
  - At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared; **or**
  - In the case of an employee or volunteer who has symptoms that could be COVID-19 and does not get evaluated by a medical professional or tested for COVID-19, the individual is assumed to have COVID-19, and the individual may not return to work until the individual has completed the same three-step criteria listed above; **or**
  - If the staff, teacher or volunteer has symptoms that could be COVID-19 and wants to return to work before completing the above self-isolation period, the individual must obtain a medical professional's note clearing the individual for return based on an alternative diagnosis.
- All staff, teachers or volunteers must wear a face covering while at work and interacting with other employees and public in general, unless there is a contraindication.
- Employees should wash hands often for at least 20 seconds with soap and water or use disinfectant hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Employees may consider using gloves and should be encouraged to wash hands often for at least 20 seconds with soap and water or use disinfectant hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- When possible, use flexible worksite and flexible work hours to help establish polices and practices for social distancing between employees and others, especially if social distancing between employees and others.

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## Sanitation

- Clean and disinfect surfaces and equipment routinely throughout the day.
  - Consider use of wipeable covers for electronics.
  - If no manufacturer guidance is available, consider the use of alcohol-based wipes or spray containing at least 70% alcohol to clean equipment buttons and touch screens.
- Practice hand hygiene frequently: wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Ensure bathrooms at the schools are supplied adequately with soap, water, and drying materials so that student, public in general and staff can wash their hands as recommended.
- School officials must ensure adequate amount of trash receptacles are placed throughout the school campus.
- Provide an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol for use if restroom or hand washing station is not in close proximity. Consider placing the alcohol-based hand sanitizer in visible, frequently used locations such as registration desks, water stations, etc.
- Practice routine cleaning of highly touched areas and surfaces: including doorknobs, tables, handles, desks, toilets, faucets, sinks, hand rails, etc.
- Frequently disinfect surfaces that may be contaminated with germs with EPA-approved products effective against emerging viral pathogens to include the virus that causes COVID-19. Follow the manufacturer’s instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., concentration, application method and contact time, use of personal protective equipment). A list of products with EPA-approved emerging viral pathogens is available.

Dr. Hector Ocaranza, Health Authority

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