

Checklist: 5 starter plays for enhancing mental health and well-being during reopening

Print this page to help track your progress toward completing the 5 starter steps.



1. Community-building activities

- Conduct daily morning meetings.
- Find time for staff and student check-ins.
- Identify opportunities for peer learning (for example, lessons designed to provide ways for students to learn and work together).



2. Trauma-informed training

- Provide staff and teachers with professional learning opportunities.
- Review and revise school policies and procedures to be more trauma-informed and adapted to a virtual context.
- Create opportunities for staff to observe each other and provide feedback.



3. Open discussions on environmental stressors

- Build in time to practice new routines (for example, teaching handwashing, no-touch practices, and virtual high-fives).
- Build in time during the day to allow students to express and process emotions.



4. Social-emotional skill building

- Build in time during the day for students to share their experiences.
- Introduce coping strategies that students can apply to those experiences.
- Integrate practices that promote social-emotional skills (for example, “mindful minutes” in between activities).
- Provide a calming space or set of strategies for students to de-stress.



5. Mental health support services

- Create a process to identify students who are struggling with mental health.
- Ensure all staff understand how to refer students for additional resources and support.
- Create easy pathways for accessing mental health resources (for example, regular classroom visits by mental health staff or passes to access counseling).
- Create a process for families and school staff to collaborate on and share student support plans and resources.

Checklist: 5 starter plays for enhancing your COVID-19 prevention strategy

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1. Provide staff and teachers with training opportunities

- Train staff on policies and procedures.
- Educate staff about COVID-19 transmission, symptoms, and effects on local communities.
- Train staff and teachers on how to discuss new policies and programs.
- Train staff and teachers on how to establish physical space in classrooms and hallways.
- Use data on attendance, student engagement, student health records, and public health data to identify student support opportunities.
- Speak with school staff about employee sanitation, like physical distancing and respiratory etiquette.
- Establish a process for raising questions and sharing feedback about COVID-19 policy changes.



2. Take advantage of your staff's expertise in health and wellness

- Plan and implement COVID-19 prevention strategies in partnership with school staff, such as nurses and other specialized instructional support personnel (SISP), health and physical education teachers, and custodial staff.
- Ensure staff and teachers are trained to help develop your reopening plan.
- Develop plans for supporting populations at high risk for COVID-19.



3. Engage students' families to help develop and implement your prevention strategy

- Invite families to planning meetings.
- Inform families about when to send their children to school, safety protocols, and who to contact with questions or concerns.
- Communicate what's required for students to return to school, like well-child visits, immunizations, screenings, and testing.
- Share resources to help families speak with their children about COVID-19.
- Inform families about school programs and services that are and aren't available.
- Conduct surveys, focus groups, or virtual town halls to collect ongoing feedback.



4. Work with community partners and agencies to develop and implement your prevention strategy

- Designate a point of contact on the school staff to liaison with local public health agencies and ensure up-to-date COVID-19 information is available to share.
- Work with local public health agencies, health care providers, and community-based organizations to provide resources and support.
- Engage with local and state decision-making authorities to share successes and challenges that can inform future policymaking.
- Partner with culturally specific organizations to develop outreach materials for families.



5. Destigmatize COVID-19

- Uphold your students' civil rights by preventing bullying, harassment, and racist behavior.
- Implement truancy and absenteeism strategies to ensure students and families feel supported and engaged in the school community.
- Implement strategies that recognize the different lived experiences of families and how COVID-19 has affected their lives.

Checklist: The 5 starter plays for affecting the social drivers of health during reopening

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1. Begin to address the impact of institutional racism on education and health

- Seek out partners in equity, diversity, and inclusion to provide resources and training for all school staff.
- Build authentic relationships with formal and informal leaders of color from your community.



2. Connect your community to resources for food security

- Widely distribute food access information to families.
- Consider working directly with a local food pantry.
- Ensure that all staff are prepared for home visits.
- Help ensure that eligible families receive Pandemic EBT.
- Work with local health and human services to support applications for SNAP and WIC.
- Coordinate applications for free or reduced meals or universal meal programs.
- Find meals for kids when schools are closed.
- Identify resources for families who may be ineligible for federal assistance due to immigration status or other factors.



3. Work with local health and human services to support families enrolling in Medicaid or CHIP

- Educate families about who qualifies for Medicaid's free or low-cost medical benefits: eligible adults with a low income, children, pregnant women, people who are age 65 or over, and people with disabilities.
- Inform families that if income is too high for Medicaid, a child may still qualify for the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). It covers medical and dental care for uninsured children and teens up to age 19.



4. Connect families or staff experiencing homelessness to unstable-housing resources

- Identify local opportunities for students and families experiencing homelessness and housing instability, like your local HUD office, the local public Housing Authority, or an affordable housing locator.
- Point students and families to community housing aid, like the National Low Income Housing Coalition, legal resources and housing assistance, and community action agencies.
- Create opportunities for your McKinney-Vento liaison to educate parents, staff, and students.



5. Connect families and staff to programs and organizations that support financial security

- Encourage families to [take the benefits.gov survey](#) to find government benefits they may be eligible to receive.
- Work with job development programs, skills training, and employment programs, such as the U.S. Department of Labor and Goodwill Industries.
- Co-host interview skill building, ESOL classes, or other workshops to support families and staff in achieving living-wage employment.

Checklist: The 5 starter plays for implementing physical activity and physical education during reopening

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1. Require physical education instruction

- Physical education teachers should conduct an [at-home student survey](#) to design equitable and appropriate learning experiences for their students. This helps to clearly communicate expectations for student learning and build meaningful relationships with students and their families.
- [Include students with disabilities](#) in both in-person and virtual physical education instruction. Adapt teaching strategies, equipment, environments, and assessments to meet the needs of all students.



2. Make necessary accommodations

- For in-person instruction, focus on [activities](#) that require no person-to-person contact and limited or no physical activity equipment, such as yoga, dance and rhythms, fitness, outdoor pursuits, and kicking and throwing target games.
- For virtual learning instruction, focus on [activities](#) that can be done in small spaces and that use equipment that can be accessed at home (for example, rolled-up socks as a ball for tossing and catching, or a laundry basket as a goal or target).



3. Provide professional development

- Provide professional development to physical education teachers and recess supervisors on schoolwide COVID-19 mitigation protocols, equipment sanitation, and virtual learning strategies.



4. Offer recess in person and virtually

- Utilize multiple locations for recess throughout the school and school grounds to reduce the number of students playing in one area.
- Ensure sufficient adult supervision.
- Limit use of play structures or play equipment.
- Physical education teachers should provide students and caregivers with guidance, resources, and [suggested physical activities](#) to help students participate in daily physical activity when learning from home.



5. Offer physical activity in person or virtually

- Provide teachers with example classroom-based [physical activities](#) that can be used to increase student engagement, build community within the classroom, and reestablish rapport between students and teachers.
- Increase the emphasis on incorporating physical activity during transitions, the beginning of the school day, and the closing of the school day.
- Provide caregivers with example [activities](#) that students and families can participate in daily to stay physically active and mentally healthy at home.

Checklist: The 5 starter plays for enhancing staff and teacher well-being

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1. Include staff in strategy development

- Collaborate with staff, teachers, and local bargaining units on your reopening plan and work duties.
- Provide professional learning on the impact COVID-19 has on your school, equity, racial justice, and health access.
- Gather, review, and address feedback on the effectiveness of your reopening plans.



2. Prepare staff

- Provide job-specific development opportunities, such as virtual learning techniques.
- Build processes that help staff and teachers express emotions and collaborate on solutions.
- Develop clear and consistent messages to use throughout your school community.



3. Foster resilience

- Build in time during meetings for staff, parents, and caregivers to connect.
- Provide opportunities for collaboration and shared decision-making about employee well-being.
- Engage staff and teachers during the workday with well-being activities.



4. Empower personal well-being

- Provide learning opportunities on burnout and stress reduction.
- Allow staff and teachers to schedule breaks to care for their well-being.
- Set clear and realistic expectations for in-person and virtual working hours.



5. Provide resources

- Promote district-sponsored health offerings.
- Review and revise your human resource policies.
- Connect employees to community and financial-planning resources.