

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

These plays are useful in both in-person and virtual learning environments.

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, student, and family 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.
- Engage in [curricular opportunities](#) that promote equity, diversity, and inclusion.



4. Social-emotional skill building

- Build in time during the day for [connecting and building relationships](#).
- 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.
- Work with parents and families [to support social and emotional learning in the home](#).



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 (such as 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

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



1. Provide staff and teachers with training opportunities

- Train staff and teachers on policies and procedures and [how to discuss them](#) with students and families.
- Educate yourself, and then your staff, about COVID-19 transmission, symptoms, and effects on local communities.
- Speak with staff and teachers about employee sanitation and train them 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.
- 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.
- Develop plans for supporting populations at high risk for COVID-19.
- Work with facility and maintenance staff to make sure proper air ventilation, filtration, and [cleaning and disinfecting procedures](#) are in place.



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

- [Seek family input in your school's operating plans](#) and conduct surveys and virtual town halls to collect ongoing feedback.
- 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 and inform them about available school programs and services.



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

- Designate a point of contact on school staff to be a 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: 5 starter plays for affecting the social drivers of health

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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 virtual or in-person home visits.
- Help ensure that eligible families receive [Pandemic EBT](#).
- Work with local health and human services agencies to support applications for [SNAP](#) and [WIC](#).
- Coordinate applications for free or reduced-cost 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 agencies to support families enrolling in Medicaid or CHIP

- [Check to see if your state is eligible](#) for Medicaid reimbursement for school-based health services.
- 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 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 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's](#) 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, 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: 5 starter plays for implementing physical activity, physical education, and health education

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1. Require physical education and health education instruction

- Ensure inclusion of health education (HE) and physical education (PE) instruction time in the master school schedule. Don't allow waivers for either.
- PE and HE teachers should conduct [at-home student surveys](#) to design equitable and appropriate learning experiences that build meaningful relationships with students and families.
- [Include students with disabilities](#) in both in-person and virtual PE instruction. Adapt teaching strategies, equipment, environments, and assessments to meet the needs of all students.



2. Make necessary accommodations

- For in-person PE class, focus on [activities](#) that require no person-to-person contact and limited or no physical activity equipment.
- For virtual learning PE class, focus on [activities](#) that can be done in small spaces with equipment found at home.
- For in-person HE class, follow CDC and local guidance for classroom instruction. Focus on health decisions, health information, and coping skills.
- For virtual learning HE class, focus on developing connections with students, communicating expectations, creating consistency, and making content accessible for all learners.



3. Provide professional development

- Provide professional development to PE teachers and recess supervisors on schoolwide COVID-19 prevention protocols, equipment sanitation, and virtual learning strategies.
- PE instruction in the virtual environment may require the use of additional technology by PE teachers in order to deliver synchronous or asynchronous instruction and to assess students.
- Ensure that health and PE teachers receive sufficient support, funding, and professional development to make necessary adaptations to their curriculums.



4. Offer recess in person and virtually

- Utilize multiple locations for recess throughout the school and outside to reduce the number of students playing in one area.
- Ensure sufficient adult supervision.
- Limit use of play structures or play equipment.
- PE 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.
- All teachers should schedule physical activity within their class time for their students to allow breaks from seat and screen time.



5. Offer physical activity in person or virtually

- Provide teachers with examples of classroom-based [physical activities](#) that can be used to safely 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 students and caregivers with daily [activities](#) to stay physically active and mentally healthy at home.
- Don't withhold physical activity breaks or require physical activities as disciplinary actions for students.

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

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1. Promote equity and collaboration

- Collaborate with staff, teachers, and local bargaining units on your reopening and continued learning plan and work duties.
- Provide professional learning on COVID-19's impact on your school, particularly equity, [racial justice](#), and health access.
- Gather, review, and address feedback on the effectiveness of your reopening and continued learning 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 collective 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.
- Promote healthy work routines.



5. Provide resources

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