SCHOOL CLOSURE GUIDANCE FOR PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS AND NON-PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Process Toolkit

Guidance for school and district leaders to develop short-term and long-term plans during COVID-19 school closure.

March 24, 2020
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## NOTICE

If there is a COVID-19 case in your school, the ND DoH will notify the facility. If a school is made aware of a COVID-19 case, before being contacted by the ND DoH, please report the case to the ND DoH at 1-800-472-2180 or 701-328-2378.
On March 15th, as a result of the COVID-19 global pandemic, Governor Burgum implemented an executive order calling for all public and non-public K-12 schools in North Dakota to close for the week of March 16-20. During this time, Governor Burgum has asked for district and school leaders to develop plans focused on reopening as well as how to educate in the event of an extended closure. The NDDPI is providing this document as a toolkit and guidance for district and school leaders to develop both short-term and long-term plans.

Definitions:
Partial (Soft) Closure: educational services may be provided to students by school personnel in the school if guidance from the North Dakota Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control is followed. On-campus instruction for all students is not allowed.

Full Closure: only essential personnel are allowed in school. Students should not report to school. Learning should occur by distance only, using systems organized by districts.

Extended Closure: School closure will last for a long period of time. More guidance will follow in the event of an extended closure.

**Objective:**
Transition students back into an education environment.

**Decision-Making Considerations**
1. Identify essential staff and planning teams.
2. Create a transparent communication strategy.
3. Consult all NDDPI, DOH, etc., guidance and your District Emergency Operation Plan.

**Soft Closure (First 5 Days)**
**STUDENT SAFETY**
Focus Planning: Special Education needs, Child Nutrition
- How do we ensure the physical, mental, emotional well-being of ALL students?
- How will students get fed?
- How will all students be treated equitably?
- How will staff and students be transitioned back to school?
- How will the school be sanitized?
- What is the plan for when a case of COVID-19 is confirmed within your community?

**Focus on 3 Levels of Closure**
1. Partial (Soft) Closure
2. Full Closure
3. Extended Closure

**Extended Closure: Academic Planning**
Focus Planning: Focus Planning: Alternate forms of learning, Special Education Needs, Child Nutrition
- Provide free digital resources.
- Decide on an academic make-up plan.
- If you need to make up hours, consult [procedures] on how many hours needed to make up time lost. (LINK)
- Create a virtual learning plan.
- Consider that each course, content, and grade level have unique needs that need to be addressed prior to deciding on a virtual learning mandate.

**Full Closure**
Focus Planning: Alternate forms of learning, Special Education Needs, Child Nutrition
- Continue to consider all student safety expectations.
- Who is expected to report to work?
- Do all staff have an assigned role?
- What is reasonable to expect regarding student learning expectations and staff resources?
- What staff professional development is needed?
- Do you have an internal staff human resources policy for sick leave and flexible work environments?
Emergency Planning Process

1. Form a collaborative planning team

2. Understand the situation
   a. Conduct research
   b. Analyze the information

3. Determine goals and objectives

4. Plan development
   a. Develop and analyze courses of action
   b. Identify resources

5. Plan preparation, review, and approval
   a. Write the plan
   b. Approve and implement the plan

6. Plan implementation and maintenance
   a. Exercise the plan and evaluate its effectiveness
   b. Review, revise, and maintain the plan

Core Concepts of the Planning Process

Form a collaborative planning team: Get input from all stakeholders, i.e. school administration, teachers, nutrition, custodial, maintenance, transportation, etc. This ensures all viewpoints are considered, consensus is achieved, and important information is not overlooked.

Understand the situation: Identify threats and hazards and assess risks. This helps identify the vulnerabilities and analyze the potential consequences of these threats. Consider the resources available (plans, equipment, finances, personnel), local geography and topography which may influence the situation.

Determine goals and objectives: Base goals on needs to and recovering from hazards; hazard, response, and constraint generated demands. Then restate needs and demands as: 1) operational priority; 2) response goal; 3) intermediate objectives.

Plan Development: Develop and analyze courses of action and identify resources. Planning concepts for developing a course of action: Scenario based analyzes impact of a scenario; Functional identifies the common tasks performed during emergencies; Capabilities based focuses on capacity to take a course of action. Develop a plan for the following three assumptions: 1) best case; 2) worst case; 3) most realistic.

Plan preparation, review, and approval: Develop a plan based on course of action strategies. Allow for a review process by all entities with responsibilities (time permitting). Basic rules: Keep it simple; avoid jargon and acronyms; use short sentences; provide detail without speculation; format the plan for ease of use. Once approval is achieved from the proper authorities, disseminate the plan to everyone who needs it.

Plan implementation and maintenance: Train and exercise the plan, then evaluate its effectiveness (time permitting). The plan is a living document, it requires regular review, revision, and maintenance.
Distance Learning Guidance

At this moment, utilizing virtual or online learning in lieu of traditional education methods, is not allowed within North Dakota Century Code. The Governor’s Office is currently researching the possibility to allow this as an option for schools. Until then, schools are not allowed to provide education to their students through an exclusively virtual or online setting. If the status of this changes, NDDPI will update and provide guidance accordingly.

The situation with the COVID-19 virus and its impact on ND K12 education continues to evolve on a nearly hourly basis. The North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (NDDPI) would like to share the following guidance regarding distance learning.

Most districts are not prepared to implement a distance learning model, such as online learning, on short notice. Some districts and schools may be in a position to continue teaching using distance learning methods through the North Dakota Center for Distance Education (NDCDE); however, equity is a critical consideration. It is important to note that if educational services are being delivered to students in any form, in order for the district to remain open, those services must be provided to all students, including students who don’t have access to technology at home and students receiving special education services.

For the purposes of this memo, virtual, online and distance learning all mean school that is offered through a digital platform rather than on-campus. As is always the case, local school leaders have decision-making powers regarding curriculum and instruction. However, consider these important factors as you explore distance learning options.

1. Ensuring Equitable Services
   a. Do all students have access to a device?
   b. Do all students have access to reliable, high-speed internet?
   c. Do all classes/courses have the ability to provide instruction?
   d. Have teachers considered students’ Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs)?
      ii. Most importantly, all educational decisions for students with IEPs must be made on an individual basis and consistent with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the North Dakota Department of Instruction’s Office of Special Education guidelines.

2. Providing High-Quality, Effective, Standards-Based Education
   a. Is the distance learning experience of high quality?
   b. Does the content align to North Dakota Content Standards?
   c. Does the technology platform allow access to an educator?
   d. Do you have a mechanism in place for assessing students and assigning “grades”?

There is a difference between offering students the option of accessing free digital learning experiences to students and requiring/mandating all students attend a virtual “school”. Further guidance will be released about this process soon.

Please see the linked guidance from the American School Counselor Association relating to virtual school counseling during an emergency shutdown. School counselors still must follow all ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors. School counselors should also work collaboratively with all
stakeholders to ensure equity, access and success of all students whether virtual school counseling is offered synchronously or asynchronously. Click on this link to access [ASCA’s position statement on virtual school counseling](#).

School districts can contact EduTech at help@k12.nd.us for assistance with training and consulting on Office 365 and other distance learning platforms at no cost, if this is an option you would like to entertain.

If you have any questions, please don’t hesitate to call Amanda Peterson, Assistant Director of Academic Support at (701) 328-3545 or email at amandapeterson@nd.gov or Joe Kolosky, Director of School Approval and Opportunity at jkolosy@nd.gov.

**School Guidance**

Health officials are currently taking steps to prevent the introduction and spread of novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) into communities across the United States. Schools will undoubtedly play an important role in this effort. Through collaboration and coordination with local health departments, schools can take steps to disseminate information about the disease and its potential transmission within their school community. Schools can prepare to take steps to prevent the spread of COVID-19 among their students and staff. The NDDPI provides the following information to help answer any questions that may arise.

**School Closure Q & A**
On March 15, Gov. Doug Burgum and State Supt. Kirsten Baesler had a conference call with all North Dakota school superintendents. There was a 45-minute Q & A session available online.

If you have additional questions, please email Kirsten Baesler.

**Making Up School Hours**

NDCC 15.1-06-04. School calendar – Length, indicates a school district shall provide for a school calendar including: At least 962.5 hours of instruction for elementary school students and 1,050 hours of instruction for middle and high school students.

If a school must close for an extended period because of a quarantine and should fall below the minimum hours, the following options are available:

- Making up the hours on planned Professional Development (PD) days, if the mandatory three PD days are already met;
- Making up school time on Saturdays;
- Extending the school day; or
- Extending the school year.

**Student Attendance**

Many districts, parents, and guardians have expressed worry about student absences related to COVID-19 safety concerns. Many parents in North Dakota are considering keeping their children home to protect them from contracting COVID-19. Questions have arisen regarding if a parent can keep their child home for an extended period, and if there will be a consequence if they do. In these cases, parents have the ultimate decision-making authority regarding their children. School board members and administrators are encouraged to look at their current attendance and contagious disease policies and make the most logical and practical decision. Districts should keep student safety and wellbeing at the forefront when making any decision impacting student learning. Districts should also review any student attendance.
incentive practice or procedure they have in place which might encourage a student to come to school when they are ill.

**Assessment and Accountability**
The U.S. Department of Education (USED) has provided information to state education agencies regarding possible flexibility for assessments and accountability as a result of COVID-19 on a case-by-case basis. Should the need arise, the NDDPI will work with districts on adjustments related to state assessments scheduled this spring.

**Notifications**
If districts experience school closures, it is the NDDPI’s expectation they follow their standard procedure for notifying parents and guardians. This includes, but is not limited to calls, emails, updates to their district websites, text messages, and contacting local news stations. If parents and families do not hear from their districts regarding a closure, they should contact their school principal or district superintendent.

**State Aid Reimbursement**
In the event of an emergency and a school falls below the minimum number of hours required by law, schools can submit a waiver for state aid reimbursement payments.

**NDCC 15.1-27-23. Weather or other emergency conditions** - Closure of schools - State aid payments to school districts, reads:

1. The board of each school district shall establish the length of a period, day, and week in accordance with the requirements of section 15.1-06-04. If a public school or school district is closed or provides less than a full day of instruction, the public school or school district shall reschedule those hours to ensure students receive at least the minimum number of instructional hours required by subdivision a of subsection 1 of section 15.1-06-04.

2. Any public school or school district for which the rescheduling of classes would create undue hardship may request, for purposes of calculating state aid payments to the school district, the governor waive the rescheduling in whole or in part.

You can access the waiver on our website.

**Special Education Guidance on Providing Services to Children with Disabilities During COVID-19**

During the Covid-19 National Emergency, the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (NDDPI) recognizes that administrators and educators are striving to address the challenge of moving to a system of learning where students are not allowed in the school building because of health and safety concerns. It is recognized that educators and parents are working to provide a sense of normality for students during these unprecedented times. The North Dakota Department of Public Instruction wants to support schools and families to creatively make good faith efforts by including what is an appropriate and reasonable means to educate students through distance learning.

It is important to emphasize that federal disability law, including IDEA and 504, allows for flexibility in determining how to meet the individual needs of students with disabilities. The determination of how FAPE is to be provided may need to be addressed on an individual basis. Although federal law requires distance instruction to be accessible to students with disabilities, it does not mandate specific methodologies.
In accordance with the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction interim guidance and the Governor’s Executive Order, the intent is to educate and graduate the students of North Dakota through the end of the academic year while maintaining the health and safety of all, including students with disabilities. There may be circumstances where an IEP/504 team needs to consider once school resumes under normal circumstances, on an individual basis, whether there is a need for compensatory education.

1. Distance Learning: all students are provided an opportunity to learn from a distance.
   a) Under the IDEA, every student with an IEP is entitled to receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE), which includes specially designed instruction based on a student’s unique needs designed to ensure the student makes progress in the general curriculum and toward meeting IEP goals. 34 C.F.R. §§300.39 and 300.320.
   b) Districts must consider the technology needs of each student with an IEP in order to provide access to regular and special education services. If additional technology is needed for a student to receive FAPE, it must be provided by the school, at no charge to the student. 34 C.F.R. §300.105. Submission and approval of state approved plans will outline the full continuation of services to be considered as replacing instructional time.
   c) Upon return to normal school operations, each IEP team for students with an IEP must review the provision of FAPE during the period of distance learning, to determine whether compensatory services are warranted in any service area, including instruction and/or any individual therapies. (OSERS March 2020).

2. Attendance: during distance learning, attendance will continue to be monitored as outlined in the district’s approved plan. If,
   a) individual students with an IEP are absent for 10 consecutive school days or less, the provision of services to the extent available is not considered a change of placement;
   b) the absence is likely to be more than 10 consecutive school days, the IEP team must consider change of placement decisions on an individual basis;
   c) the parent chooses to keep a student with an IEP home for precautionary measures, the district is not obligated to provide homebound services or consider the need for compensatory education. This decision must be based on the individual needs of the child and not on perceptions of the child’s needs based on generalizations regarding his or her disability;
   d) the parent requests the district not provide services to a home bound student due to health and safety concerns, the student is considered absent and the district is not required to make up services;
   e) the district determines, for health and safety reasons, that staff will not provide home bound services during the public health emergency, the district must hold an IEP meeting and determine what, and if any, services must be made up.

3. Evaluation and IEP Timelines:
   a) For students ages 3-21, the 60-day timeline for initial evaluation continues to be in effect. Reasons for not meeting this timeline must be clearly documented in a Prior Written Notice. If, because of exceptional circumstances, the 60-calendar day timeline will not be met,
the IEP team must clearly document the exceptional circumstance, the timeline for completing the evaluation, and present parents with their procedural safeguards if they are disputing the rationale. The Department of Education recently stated in its *March 21 Supplemental Factsheet*, “Once the evaluation is completed, IDEA does not contain an explicit timeline for making the eligibility determination...” In ND the eligibility determination is made at the Integrated Written Assessment meeting to review evaluation results, which is due within 60 calendar days.

b) During exceptional circumstances, districts may consider a virtual IEP team meeting. However, the determination must be made on a case-by-case basis, must include the parent and other required IEP team members, and cannot be the only meeting format considered. This decision must be clearly documented in a Prior Written Notice. Parents must be presented with their procedural safeguards.

All educational decisions for student with IEPs must be made on an individual basis and consistent with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction policy.

**Additional Resources:**

- While Serving Children with Disabilities Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services (OSERS): [COVID-19](#)
- Council of Administrators of Special Education: [Considerations for Special Education Administrators](#)
- United States Department of Education: [Q&A on Providing Services to Children with Disabilities During the Coronavirus](#)
- United States Department of Education: [Q&A on FERPA and Student Privacy with Coronavirus](#)
- Online Learning for Students with Disabilities: [Considerations for LEA Policies, Practices, and Procedures](#)
- U.S. Department of Education Releases Webinar, Fact Sheet for Protecting Students’ Civil Rights During COVID-19 Response: [Fact Sheet](#)

**Nutrition**

Q: Do we HAVE to participate in providing meals?

A: No. The U.S. Department of Agriculture does not require this. However, the Governor and Superintendent of Public Instruction have referred to the importance of continuing to serve school meals. Some schools are not eligible to participate in the Summer Food Service Program and may not be reimbursed for the meals they serve.

Q: What are our district’s options for providing meals to students?

A: The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) is the primary meal program available to the schools.

1. Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)
a. Open Sites – must be in eligible SFSP area (attendance area of school where at least 50% of students eligible for free or reduced-price meals or an area eligible by census data. Meals may be provided to all children. All meals claimed at SFSP rate

b. Closed Enrolled Sites - Non-eligible area. Meals outreach targeted to free/reduced price eligible children. If a paid child learns about the program and want to attend, they must not be denied the opportunity to enroll in order to participate. All meals claimed at SFSP rate.

2. NSLP – when distance learning is provided
   a. Meals distributed to students that request. Claim meals in appropriate eligibility category. NSLP meal pattern is used.

Q: What is the SFSP?
A: The SFSP provides meals to children in low income areas during the summer when school meals are not available. NDDPI has received a waiver from USDA to allow schools to offer the SFSP during unanticipated school closures, such as now.

Q: Summer Food sites can operate as open programs, which means they can serve any children that show up for a meal. This includes children from other, non-eligible schools (or communities) and any children not enrolled in school (age 1 and older).

A: The SFSP serves children up to age 18 or older if receiving special education services. Meals are served free of charge and the meal requirements are much simpler that school lunch or breakfast. Eligible sites may claim 2 meals/day.

Q: How do I sign up for the SFSP?
A: Contact Melissa Anderson mdanderson@nd.gov or Scott Egge segge@nd.gov for information. Districts will need to submit a short form to our office to get started. Go to the NDDPI Summer Food Service Program page: https://www.nd.gov/dpi/districtsschools/child-nutrition-and-food-distribution/summer-food-service-program-sfsp Click on the documents under SFSP Emergency Sign Up Packet

Q: What is the Federal Reimbursement for SFSP Meals?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meal</th>
<th>Rural/Urban Self Prep</th>
<th>Urban Vended</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Breakfast</td>
<td>$2.375</td>
<td>$2.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>$4.1525</td>
<td>$4.0875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snack</td>
<td>$.9775</td>
<td>$.955</td>
</tr>
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Revenue and expenses should be run through the district’s school foodservice account.

Q: What food can I serve?
A: The SFSP meal requirements are listed below. All required components must be served as a unitized meal.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Breakfast</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Milk</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruit, Vegetable or 100% Fruit Juice</td>
<td>½ cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grain (whole grain not required)</td>
<td>1 serving = 1 slice bread, ¼ cup cereal, 1 muffin, cereal bar, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Milk
- 1 cup

Fruit and/or Vegetable
- 2 items to equal ¾ cup total

Grain (whole grain not required)
- 1 serving

Meat/Meat Alternate
- 2 ounces

Q: Do I need to track the number of students taking a meal?
A: A head count (tally) is all that is needed for SFSP meals. Be sure to count all meals distributed. Count breakfast and lunch separately. A meal counting sheet is available at the following link: [https://www.nd.gov/dpi/districtsschools/child-nutrition-and-food-distribution/summer-food-service-program-sfsp](https://www.nd.gov/dpi/districtsschools/child-nutrition-and-food-distribution/summer-food-service-program-sfsp) Reimbursement is only paid for meals distributed to children. The district may choose to either charge adults for meals (we recommend $2 for breakfast and $4 for lunch) or cover the cost of the adult meals through the general fund. Do not use your electronic system.

Q: Can I use my USDA foods (commodities)?
A: Yes, use your USDA foods.

Q: Can I give out two meals at one time? Both Breakfast and Lunch?
A: Yes, you can give out BOTH Breakfast and Lunch at one time. You can also distribute meals for multiple days (up to 5 days) as long as they are counted for correctly. Use a separate tally sheet for each meal, each day.

Q: Do I need to maintain a production record tracking the food that is served?
A: Yes, you will need to maintain a production record listing the foods served and serving sizes just like the NSLP/SBP food program. A production record template is available at the following link: [https://www.nd.gov/dpi/districtsschools/child-nutrition-and-food-distribution/summer-food-service-program-sfsp](https://www.nd.gov/dpi/districtsschools/child-nutrition-and-food-distribution/summer-food-service-program-sfsp)

Q: Can a parent pick up the meals for their children?
A: Yes, a parent or guardian may pick up meals for their children as long as the district ensures that meals are only distributed to children and that duplicate meals are not distributed to any child.

Q: Who do I contact at ND DPI Child Nutrition with questions?
A: Contact the Child Nutrition office 1-888-338-3663 or 701-328-2294.

Q: Are there any other meal service options available to districts?
A: Districts may work with DPI to enroll in the Emergency Meals to You program. This program mails shelf-stable meals to students from districts that meet Summer Food Service Program eligibility criteria. More information about the program is available at the following link: [https://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/covid-19-meal-delivery](https://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/covid-19-meal-delivery)

Q: Are there any specific requirements for home delivered meals?
A: Yes, households must provide written consent to the district to have meals delivered at their home. Children do not have to be present when meals are delivered. A maximum of 2 meals per child
per day may be delivered. Meals for multiple days may be delivered at one time up one week’s worth of meals (equal to 5 school days).

Q: Are there meal pattern allowances in case certain food components are not available?

A: Yes, if there are disruptions in the availability of food products as a result of impacts from COVID-19 the school district may request a waiver to serve meals that do not meet meal requirements. A waiver form is available on the Child Nutrition SFSP web page.

Implementation Guidance

- Ensure all the students’ nutritional needs are addressed. This includes students with allergies and other food restrictions. Make sure to mark the food appropriately.
- Create multiple geographically located food distribution centers where necessary. Students are not allowed to eat inside the school.
- Ensure all necessary personnel are stationed to maximize student and staff safety and all distribution sites are supervised.
- Explore distribution strategies to avoid large gatherings of people and make social distancing possible.
- Students can receive two meals a day (one breakfast, one lunch, or one snack in any combination). Both meals can be distributed at once either via pick-up, drive-up or delivery.
- Only parent/guardians/students themselves may pick up food. Children do not need to be accompanied by an adult to receive food.
- Allow ample and reasonable amount of time for meal pick-up for each meal service, recognizing families may be experiencing challenges during this time.
- Use multiple modes of communication to inform students and families of available food service, including time, location, and method of distribution.
- Consider multiple methods of distribution, such as drive up; walk up; satellite locations, such as libraries, churches, park districts, and youth centers; home delivery via bus routes; and other options.

Meals and/or Instructional Material Pick-up

Implementation Options for Consideration

- Drive-up (for meals): School personnel will communicate with families the time frame in which food (breakfast/lunch) will be distributed. Families will drive to their home school or alternative location, provide their name and a sacked breakfast and lunch will be given. Each family will be provided with one meal per eligible child. Both breakfast and lunch can be given to family at once. If the home school is located on a busy intersection, another location of the school can be used.
- Walk up (to school building): Children and adults will walk to the school or alternative location to pick-up food and/or materials.
- Satellite locations (if opened): Any place families have access to. School personnel should communicate with community facilities to determine if their location is open and available to serve as a food distribution center. Locations other than schools, i.e., any place families have access to. Community facilities could include:
  - Libraries
  - Places of worship
  - Park districts
  - Youth/community centers
- Home delivery: School staff member or designee will deliver meal(s) and/or materials to student homes. Families who lack transportation or with medically fragile children can request food be
delivered to their residence. Schools should initiate plans with families prior to delivery. For meals, both breakfast and lunch can be delivered at once.

**Behavioral Health**

**Talking to Children about COVID-19**
As public conversations around coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) increase, children may worry about themselves, their family, and friends getting ill with COVID-19. Parents, family members, school staff, and other trusted adults can play an important role in helping children make sense of what they hear, in a way that is honest, accurate, developmentally appropriate, and minimizes anxiety or fear. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) has created guidance to help adults have discussions with children about COVID-19 and ways they can avoid getting and spreading the disease.

You know your children best. Let their questions be your guide as to how much information to provide. However, don’t avoid giving them the information health experts identify as critical to ensuring your children’s health. Be patient; children and youth do not always talk about their concerns readily. Watch for clues that they may want to talk, such as hovering around while you do the dishes or yard work. It is very typical for younger children to ask a few questions, return to playing, then come back to ask more questions.

For many youths, the intense discussions, media images, and messages they are exposed to during COVID-19 can trigger a range of strong emotions. Some may experience anxiety which can present as sadness, fear, or worry, but can also make them irritable and angry. Some anxious youth keep their worries to themselves. It is important to watch sleep and eating patterns as this is often a cue they may be stressed or worried about something. [Common changes](#) to watch for can be found online.

For youth experiencing stress, we can help by spending time with them, encouraging them to talk about their feelings, maintaining a sense of normalcy in their schedules and activities, and providing healthy coping strategies. Below are general principles for talking with children.

- **Remain calm and reassuring.** Remember children will react to both what you say and how you say it. They will pick up cues from the conversations you have with them and with others. Our fear becomes their fear and our calm becomes their calm.
- **Make yourself available to listen and to talk.** Make time to talk. Be sure children know they can come to you when they have questions.
- **Avoid language that might blame others and lead to stigma.** Remember viruses can make anyone sick, regardless of a person’s race or ethnicity. Avoid making assumptions about who might have COVID-19.
- **Pay attention to what children see or hear in the media.** Consider reducing the amount of screen time focused on COVID-19. Too much information on one topic can lead to anxiety.
- **Provide information that is honest and accurate.** Give children truthful and appropriate information for the age and developmental level of the child. Talk to children about how some stories on COVID-19 on the Internet and social media may be based on rumors and inaccurate information.
- **Teach children everyday actions to reduce the spread of germs.**

Additional information and specific guidelines can be found at: [Talking to Children about COVID-19](#)

**Bullying and Harassment**
COVID-19 is not at all connected to race, ethnicity, or nationality. School staff should be mindful of bullying, intimidation, or harassment of students based on actual or perceived race, color, national
origin, or disability (including the actual disability of being infected with COVID-19 or perception of being infected) which may result in a violation of state and federal civil rights laws. School districts must take immediate and appropriate action to investigate what occurred when responding to reports of bullying or harassment. If parents and families believe their child has experienced bullying, harassment, or intimidation related to the COVID-19 outbreak, they should contact their school principal or their designee.

**Coping Strategies**
Coping strategies are actions we do to deal with stress. It is important during stressful times to be aware of unhealthy strategies, such as drinking and smoking, or healthy strategies, such as reading and exercise. To support emotional well-being and reduce stress, focus on healthy coping strategies. They may include the following: exercise, listening to music, journaling, reading, playing games, drawing, talking with a friend, etc. Following is a great resource school counselors often use: The Coping Skills Toolbox by Baldwin County Public Schools.

**Mental Health and Well Being: Addressing Supports and Resources**
The impact of a school closure goes beyond academics. Schools need be aware of and prepared to cope with the potential impact these closures will have on the mental health and wellbeing of students, staff, and families. The stress of preparing for COVID-19 and school closure can increase the worry and anxiety of students, staff, families, and communities. Districts should work through plans for smooth continuity of services including school-linked mental health and other student supports.

Schools should work with state and local governments and faith- and community-based organizations to facilitate the provision of any needed assistance or resources for students and families.
- Encourage families to continue accessing services.
- Establish a system for facilitating the communication between families and service providers regarding continuation of services.
- Assist families in accessing health and social services by identifying public and private organizations that provide services during a public health emergency.

**Services in Your Area**
Finding services in your area can be challenging. As we work together as a state to slow the spread of COVID-19, we know social distancing is an important strategy. Social distancing can also be confusing, isolating, and frightening for some. We do not have to go through this alone. FirstLink can assist in finding food, paying housing bills, accessing free childcare, or other essential services for our students and families during this critical time. They also have a database of community resources which is an excellent resource. Ndkids.org has developed a statewide map of services to help you find services in your area.

The following resources can help schools and districts provide supports during school closure. Resources can be used by school and district leaders to protect your health and well-being of those you serve.
- **Identifying Signs of Stress in your Children and Teens**
- **Maintaining Healthy Levels of Stress in Your Children**
- **Teen Suicide: Identifying Warning Signs and Ways to Respond**
- **Suicide Prevention**
- **Family Voices** (aims to achieve family-centered care for all children and youth with special health care needs and/or disabilities)
- **Federation of Families** (a parent-run organization focused on the needs of children and youth with emotional, behavioral or mental disorders and their families)
- **Find a regional human service center** which offers behavioral health assessments and services.
• Call 2-1-1, a simple, free number that connects callers to information about health and human services.
• National Association of School Psychologists; Talking to Children About COVID-19, A Parent Resource
• Talking With Children: Tips for Caregivers, Parents, and Teachers During Infectious Disease Outbreaks
• Coping With Stress During Infectious Disease Outbreaks
• Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)
• Prevent Child Abuse America
• Parents Lead

School Reopening After a Pandemic
Returning staff and students are likely to be impacted in some way by the pandemic (e.g., loss of a loved one, hospitalization, economic loss). It is important, to the extent possible, to assess the personal impact of the pandemic on staff, students, and their families prior to reopening in order to obtain the resources needed for recovery. Your school based mental health team; school counselor, social worker, school nurse, school psychologist, and school resource officers can assist developing a strategic plan to address student, staff, and family needs.

School are recommended to:
• Debrief students and staff in order to re-establish normalcy and an environment conducive to learning.
• Address the mental health needs of students and staff resulting from the stress of the pandemic.

It is recommended schools continue with prevention and mitigation strategies for staff, students, and parents. Communication with county public health authorities will remain an important component of ongoing preparedness.

School Counseling

When providing virtual learning opportunities, schools must continue to provide school counseling services, even if this is done electronically. Please see the linked guidance from the American School Counselor Association relating to virtual school counseling during an emergency shutdown. School counselors still must follow all ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors. School counselors should also work collaboratively with all stakeholders to ensure equity, access and success of all students whether virtual school counseling is offered synchronously or asynchronously. Click on this link to access ASCA’s position statement on virtual school counseling.

Assessment

NDSA:
The current testing window runs from March 16th to May 8th. If needed, we can look at an extension of the closing date. In the scenario of school closing for extended period, the NDDPI would explore waivers of state testing. More information to come as situation becomes less fluid.

NDAA:
The current testing window runs from February 3rd to May 15th in ELA and Math and March 11th to May 15th for science. If needed, we can look at an extension for the closing date. In the scenario of school closing for an extended period, NDPI would explore waivers for state testing. More information to come as situation becomes less fluid.

ACT:
The initial state ACT test was administered on March 3rd. Make-up testing is scheduled to take place on March 24th with the last make up testing date on April 7th. In the event the schools are still closed on March 24th, we would defer to the last testing date on April 7th. ACT is exploring the possibility of an alternate make up test date for states with the current situation. (Paper and pencil test)

There is also the opportunity for schools to switch to online testing and create more flexibility. This creates testing windows during these times: March 24-26th, March 31st-April 2nd, April 7th-9th, April 14th-16th.

* National Testing - ACT has rescheduled its April 4 national test date to June 13 across the U.S. in response to concerns about the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19). All students registered for the April 4 test date will receive an email from ACT in the next few days informing them of the postponement and instructions for free rescheduling to June 13 or a future national test date.

ACT WorkKeys:
Window opened on March 3rd and closes March 24th. With the assessment being online, the probability for an extension of the closing date increases. Currently collecting this information.

ACCESS:
Window closed on February 21st.

GED:
If continuing to GED test, move to a 50% testing capacity rule to create further distance between testers. Please follow host agency guidelines/closings. (Guidance sent to all testing centers in ND from Pearson Vue/GED)

SAT:
* National Testing - In response to the rapidly evolving situation around the coronavirus (COVID-19), the College Board is canceling the May 2, 2020, SAT administration. Makeup exams for the March 14 administration (scheduled March 28) are also canceled. Registered students will receive refunds.

AP Central College Board Guidance on Advanced Placement:
With school closures due to COVID-19, the most recent updates regarding Advanced Placement (AP) courses and exams can be found on AP Central/College Board.

As stated on March 13, College Board is focused on supporting students’ learning of the remaining content and skills in the courses in which they are enrolled. College Board is also focusing on providing flexible and streamlined testing opportunities and partnering with colleges and universities to ensure students receive the college credit they have been striving to earn all year.

The College Board will make alternative testing dates available for schools mandated to close in March and/or April.

- If a school can make up most of the lost instruction time, the College Board recommends testing on the regularly scheduled exam dates. If a school needs to make up instructional time, they may update students’ exam orders to late testing scheduled for the third week of May. Selecting
“school closing: election, national holiday, or natural disaster” ensures the late-testing fee is not applied.

- Testing in the fourth week of May is possible, if needed, and must be requested through AP Services for Educators.
- Schools closed for extended periods of time that may need later options (i.e., June retest dates) can contact AP Services for Educators beginning in April to make such arrangements.

Beginning March 16, 2020: If a school lost instructional dates for the following AP courses and would like to request extensions for portfolio submission deadlines, please contact AP Services for Educators:

- AP 2-D Art and Design
- AP 3-D Art and Design
- AP Computer Science Principles
- AP Drawing
- AP Research
- AP Seminar

Some educators may rely on remote instruction for periods of school closure, making it challenging to track student understanding of material and adjust to student needs. The College Board AP has a one-page overview explaining how teachers can use the free daily online practice in AP Classroom to check student understanding on each topic and skill in the AP course and ensure students are well prepared for exam day.

AP teachers can access any of the following resources to assist with AP Classroom:

- Foundations
  Learn how AP Classroom complements the new AP course and exam descriptions and offers students opportunities for practice and feedback throughout the year.

- AP Classroom Demo
  See a click-through demonstration of AP Classroom, which highlights how to assign, score, and interpret results from Topic Questions, Personal Progress Checks, and teacher-created assignments and quizzes from the AP Question Bank.

- AP Quick Start Videos
  Watch short tutorials on the recent features added to AP Classroom.
  Beginning in early April, free online video lessons will be available regarding AP topics and skills, typically taught in the final weeks of each AP course.

AP Services for Educators contact information: apexams@info.College Board.org or (877)-274-6474

**Federal Title**

Consider the following:

- Process for appropriate instruction to ensure accessibility to content, dependent on federal title designation
  - Schoolwide- this is addressed in the school’s overall plan as staff funded with Schoolwide funds can serve all students
Targeted—this needs to be specifically addressed in how Title I teachers will be providing instruction to identified Title I students

Private—districts will need to reach out to private schools and include in their plan how Title I teachers will provide instruction to identified students

### Paying Federally Funded Staff During School Closure Guidance:

A state, district, or other recipient may use federal funds to pay its federally funded staff during a closure if it uses state or local funds to pay state and locally funded staff during the closure. For example, if state funds will pay state-funded staff during a closure, then Title I funds can pay Title I-funded staff, Title II funds can pay Title II-funded staff, IDEA funds can pay IDEA-funded staff, etc. It is important for districts to continue to pay paraprofessionals and other ancillary staff with state funds so federal funds can continue to pay federally funded paraprofessionals and ancillary staff. Access the USDE guidance here.

### Attendance and Truancy

Ensure your attendance and absence policy accommodates for the implementation of your distance learning model. Clearly communicate expectations to students, staff and parents. All students should follow individual district, school policies and guidelines for excused absences. Please exercise caution before starting the truancy process.

### English Learners

Provision of education for English learners is an important consideration when engaging in this planning. The school district remains responsible for educating English learners. Districts must plan how they will continue to meet the requirements of English learners’ educational needs.

By law, students who are identified to receive English language development services must be provided supports that allow them access to academic content. English learners must receive research-based, appropriately resourced supports to access content, and districts may not withhold services based on characteristics such as immigration status.

A brief overview of legal requirements for English language development services can be found in the U.S. Department of Education’s Dear Colleague Letter regarding education for English learners. Immediate considerations for English learners include:

- Access to a reliable internet connection
- Communication with families that may not speak English as a primary language
- Ability of the student to understand and produce complex academic language for assignments without typical scaffolds
- Availability of scaffolding methods available in a distance learning environment

Ultimately, English learners need to have the chance to access grade level standards and still need some sort of support to access academic content. For practical strategies and resources to teach K-12 ELs online, SupportEd is hosting a webinar Wednesday, March 18 at 2:00 CT. If you are unable to attend the live webinar, SupportEd will post a recording as well.

### Considerations for Supporting English Learners

- Do we still need to serve English learners?
Yes. While distance learning is likely a new medium of instruction for many students and educators, the law is clear, students still need to be served. To the extent possible, service should reflect the language proficiency levels of the students. In some cases, different service levels would boil down to the amount of time students receive services from a licensed English language development teacher. We are aware some English language development teachers serve students by co-teaching content classes with licensed content teachers. Collaboration between English language development teachers and academic content teachers is still encouraged. Regarding content instruction, English learners still need to have access to core content instruction from a teacher licensed in that content area.

- **What types of scaffolds can we provide to English learners?**
  Educators should consider the options available to them to provide access to content for English learners. Home language is an asset and should be utilized. Many online learning resources, such as Khan Academy, provide videos in Spanish, French, and Portuguese. While these translations certainly wouldn’t help many English learners in North Dakota, and it certainly wouldn’t substitute for core content instruction, it is the type of resource educators should consider using. We urge caution when using it because it certainly doesn’t always provide accurate translations, but Google Translate is a resource to consider for students. However, please note, this is a tool and is not a substitute for English language development services and shouldn’t be used absent from other attempts to scaffold instruction. Teachers should also consider using online platforms such as Google Hangouts and Zoom—which have been made free for educators during this pandemic—to provide small group instruction to students, provided students have access to devices and a reliable internet connection.

- **How should we reach out to the parents of students receiving English language development services and multilingual parents in general during the COVID-19 pandemic?**
  Districts will need to consider a variety of ways to reach out to families who do not use English as a primary language. Multilingual staff have not only linguistic resources but also cultural capital that may allow them to be trusted messengers. They should be leveraged whenever possible. Districts should also consider multiple modes of communicating, such as by phone call, email, and social media in as many languages as they are able. Community assets should also be leveraged. Multilingual and multicultural leaders of trusted community organizations and religious institutions should be utilized whenever possible to reach out to families who primarily speak a language other than English.

- **Can the English language development teacher provide credit-bearing content instruction via distance learning if they don’t have a license in the content area or if they are not collaborating with a licensed co-teacher?**
  No. This is the case during typical school instruction and this requirement does not go away in this situation.

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**Students Experiencing Homelessness or Housing Instability**

North Dakota Public schools identified over 2,407 students experiencing homelessness enrolled in February 2019. Roughly double this number are expected to have been identified by the end of the school year. Due to the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of students facing homelessness could grow even further, particularly among families who today may be in a precarious
housing situation, such as paying too much for rent and dependent on low-wage jobs that may also be impacted by the pandemic.

Students experiencing homelessness face unique barriers from school closings and to participating in distance learning, including limited availability of technology and living situations that do not support doing homework (e.g., in a car). Schools have critical responsibilities for the education of these students and are also critical partners in the community-wide response to addressing the unique vulnerabilities of these students. Students experiencing homelessness are disproportionately students of color, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ), and/or students with disabilities, meaning a robust plan for meeting the needs of these students is also a critical equity issue to ensure all North Dakota students can participate fully in distance learning.

Every school and school district’s distance learning plan should specify how it will satisfy the Federal requirements of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, to support homelessness students throughout this crisis and promote their full participation in their education throughout the duration of the distance learning period.

During the planning period, schools and school districts should:

- Understand the legal requirements for districts to support homeless students in having full access to education, which remain in full force and effect. In addition to NDDPI posted guidance for school districts on meeting these requirements, several technical assistance centers and associations also have guides for implementing these requirements, including the National Center on Homeless Education, the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth, and SchoolHouse Connection.
- Designate key staff who will coordinate homeless-specific responses at a district or school level. In addition to the Federally-mandated district-level homeless liaison role, schools with a high rate or large number of homeless students will benefit from having designated staff at a school-level for assessing, planning for, and responding to the needs of homeless students.
- Monitor evolving and emerging recommendations specifically pertaining to homeless students during the COVID-19 pandemic offered by SchoolHouse Connection and that may be available from other sources over time.
- Follow social media accounts of and subscribe to the mailing lists for organizations that will consolidate and disseminate recommendations and resources to support homeless students throughout the pandemic, including the National Center on Homeless Education, the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth, and SchoolHouse Connection.
- Assess the living situations and other characteristics of students flagged as experiencing homelessness in their student record to help triage where the greatest support will be needed for these students to fully participate in distance learning. For example, students who are presently unsheltered or staying somewhere not meant for habitation may have a more difficult time participating in distance learning than students who are staying in an emergency shelter equipped with internet access.
- Develop, implement, and distribute an assessment of each student’s needs related to distance learning that does not presume students have stable or consistent housing. This assessment should be easy for parents or guardians to complete and guide them to resources to help meet basic requirements for participation in distance learning (e.g., a consistent place to do homework that allows students to concentrate).
- Determine how existing or alternative transportation options could be deployed to meet basic student needs that would normally be met at school, such as delivery of meals, educational materials, or other resources.
• Develop expectations for distance learning that do not require access to specific technology, including computers, telephones, or internet, and specifies options for students who do not have access to these things.
• Engage your local shelters or other locations where students experiencing homelessness may be concentrated (e.g., emergency shelters, domestic violence shelters, drop-in centers for homeless youth, etc.) to help strengthen their ability to support students’ participation in distance learning. This could include, for example, loaning computers from a school computer lab to a location where students could use them within a shelter to do their homework.
• Engage your local public health departments, county or Tribal human services departments, and Continuum of Care region on planning efforts to meet the needs of homeless students throughout the pandemic. With these local partners, develop protocols for how schools would identify and meet the needs of students experiencing homelessness in ways consistent with protecting student privacy, including the special provisions that apply in emergencies.
• Engage your local libraries to assess their ability to help support students’ success with distance learning, including study spaces, computer access, and access to instructional materials.
• Establish a hotline for students who may have difficulties participating in distance learning to use in connecting with school personnel who can help troubleshoot or identify options, ideally with the option to allow text messaging in addition to telephone calls.
• Anticipate increased student support needs related to anxiety and trauma related to the pandemic.
• Throughout the distance learning period, schools and school districts should:
  • Implement expectations for distance learning that do not require students to check in or report attendance over video or audio connections, which may be infeasible in the setting where a student is located.
  • Encourage students and parents to reach out if their living situation changes and to access additional support to promote every student’s ability to participate in distance learning.
  • Monitor participation and engagement of homeless students in distance learning (e.g., including both attendance and performance) as a distinct group, to help guide whether additional staff support, engagement, or assistance are needed for students experiencing homelessness.
  • Schedule leadership-level reviews of the efficacy of distance learning plans and approaches for homeless students and consider alternatives or additional support needs as part of that review.
  • Monitor emerging guidance or recommendations on supporting homeless students and implement changes as appropriate.
  • Maintain regular contact with local public health departments, county or Tribal human services departments, and Continuum of Care planning bodies on ongoing or emerging needs and to connect to resources that can assist students and families experiencing homelessness.

Early Childhood / Head Start

1) **COVID-19 Wages and Benefits**: In addition to the general flexibilities in [ACF-IM-HS-19-01](#), the Office of Head Start (OHS) is providing the following additional flexibility regarding wage and benefits for employees impacted by Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) closures. In response to COVID-19, OHS is advising grantees to coordinate with local health authorities and implement their existing policies and procedures related to closure of Head Start centers during infectious disease outbreaks. Closure of centers in areas heavily impacted by COVID-19 is an important element of containing and limiting its spread. In recognition of the unique circumstances
associated with COVID-19, OHS is directing programs to continue to pay wages and provide benefits for staff unable to report to work during center closures necessary to address COVID-19. During center closures, employees should continue to engage families and to deliver services to the extent possible, remotely. This additional emergency response flexibility is important to ensure critical grants management activities can continue during closures. It will help ensure staff are ready and able to return to work as soon as it is possible to resume operations. This flexibility remains in effect through April 30, 2020 unless further extended by OHS.

2) **Child & Adult Care Food Program Flexibilities**: Head Start and Early Head Start programs may provide meals to children during center closures. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has waived its group setting meal requirement for closed schools and **authorized special flexibilities** for many states. These waivers include the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). Grantees may work with their state CACFP agency to determine whether similar flexibilities that can support the ongoing availability of meals and snacks for enrolled children are available during Head Start and Early Head Start program closures. In the event of an extended center closure, perishable food should be safely disposed of in a way that minimizes waste, such as donation to a local food bank or distribution to enrolled families. The Office of Head Start (OHS) reminds programs in affected areas to follow local guidance from health departments and other authorities, including not working when sick, social distancing, and group size limitations. Possible strategies for providing food to children during center closures include the following:

- Programs could assemble bags of food, including formula for enrolled infants, and deliver them to homes in agency school buses or other agency vehicles. Families could come out to collect the bags or they could be delivered to the door.
- Food could be assembled, and families could pick it up at a center or other location. Care should be taken to avoid large groups and prevent anyone who is sick from coming to collect food. This could include a "drive-through" station in areas where families have cars.
- Programs could check with local schools, churches, or other community organizations to see if there are partnership opportunities to increase the efficiency of food distribution.

While we often think of disasters as natural events such as hurricanes and earthquakes, health emergencies can also form the basis of a disaster declaration. The guidance from **ACF-HS-IM-19-01 General Disaster Recovery Flexibilities** can be applied to Head Start and Early Head Start programs impacted by Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).

3) **Waterford UPSTART’s award-winning, at-home program** teaches children the skills they need to be ready for kindergarten. Waterford will supply ND schools with **free** licenses for students and teachers as well as **free** training for teachers, and our mentor app for families to be able to follow their student’s progress. Additionally, we do have robust data and dashboards for teachers to be able to track student progress plus they will have access to our Classroom Advantage where they could do an online lesson for their students using playlists and activities in the program.

**Following is what Waterford can supply:**

- **Waterford Reading Academy**: We will provide Waterford Reading Academy licenses for all ND schools and districts. **Waterford Reading Academy includes**:
  - For students in grades PreK-3:
• **Personalized Reading Curriculum** to be used 15-30 minutes daily. Students’ first session will include a placement activity to ensure that they are automatically placed appropriately in the program and can begin working from their individualized level.

• **Personalized Math and Science Curriculum** to be used 15-30 minutes daily, students will also be given a placement test similar to what was described in the Reading program.

• For students in grades 3-6

  • Waterford will include over 1500 Curriculets (small companion lessons used side-by-side with books). These 1500 lessons are for books that children know and love. If your students don’t have the book at home, we suggest three ways to enjoy the books:
    • having the teacher do a class read along or
    • trying to access the book online through your public library at [https://www.overdrive.com/apps/libby/](https://www.overdrive.com/apps/libby/) or
    • teachers can sign up for students to read online books for free on Epic Books at [https://getepic.com/educators](https://getepic.com/educators).

• **To activate these licenses** the superintendent of a district or principal of a school only needs to send an email to jennatrowbridge@waterford.org requesting access for their school or district.

• The Superintendent or Principals will be asked to sign a user agreement and assign a point of contact from the district or school to work with Waterford to get all schools and children set up.

• **Teacher Professional Development and Support** will be offered three ways.
  • **Recorded Brainshark Sessions** will be provided for teachers to review and start.
  • **Live Rolling Webinars** will be available for teachers to sign up. The Live webinars will be 2 hours in length and can accommodate up to 25 participants.
  • **Personalized or team training** sessions may be scheduled after licenses are set up and deployed by sending an email to jennatrowbridge@waterford.org or homeaccess@waterford.org. Personalized sessions are 2 hours in length and accommodate up to 25 participants and do require a small fee.

• **Waterford Family Academies.** As the crisis continues, we also plan to deploy our family engagement resources in a series of webinars for families to further engage with their children's learning while at home. More to come on this in the next few weeks.

• **Waterford Mentor.** All parents can access the Waterford Mentor App on their phone that will help them track their students' progress, give them recommendations on how to support their child based on what they have learned in the past week and give them relationship building ideas with their child.

• **Waterford Offline Printable Resources.** Off-line printable resources and worksheets for PreK - 1st grade in English and Spanish can be found by visiting [http://bit.do/Waterford-PracticePages](http://bit.do/Waterford-PracticePages).
• **Classroom Advantage Sample Lesson.** See a sample lesson created by teachers via Zoom to work with their teachers.
  https://drive.google.com/file/d/1sOo5c8uIDfTuyZUV90bhYxk82ixvCoRG/view

• **The length of the free-of-charge** period is through June 2020

4.) **North Dakota Department of Human Services-Child Care Guidance**

**Child Care Modified Operating Practices:** North Dakota is encouraging all childcare providers to continue to serve children and their families during the pandemic using modified operating practices. [http://www.nd.gov/dhs/info/covid-19/docs/child-care-modified-operating-practices.pdf](http://www.nd.gov/dhs/info/covid-19/docs/child-care-modified-operating-practices.pdf)

**Childcare Emergency Operating Grant:** In order to help childcare providers cover some of the extra costs of operating that will come with the modified operating practices, and to help sustain the childcare industry through this period of disruption, the state of North Dakota will be offering emergency operating grants to childcare providers. This grant will be available to all childcare providers licensed by the State of North Dakota. [http://www.nd.gov/dhs/info/covid-19/docs/child-care-op-grant-overview.pdf](http://www.nd.gov/dhs/info/covid-19/docs/child-care-op-grant-overview.pdf)

### Communication

In communicating with families, your community, community partners and local media, keep in mind the following:

- When and how to expect communication from the district
- Where they can find the distance learning plan on your website (must be posted on website before distance learning begins)
- What is the structure of distance learning in your district?
- When will educators and school leaders be available and how can they be reached?
- How will students be able to retrieve their belongings from school (from lockers, etc.)?
- Student expectations (attendance, assignments, hours, due dates, etc.)
- Reminder about Student Information System and how to sign up
- How to access meals

Community partners often include (but not limited to): first-responders, local government, elected officials, nonprofit organizations, libraries, businesses, childcare centers, associations

### Language Access

Every family deserves access to the information provided by their district or school. Language translations and interpretations of this information should be made available as quickly as possible.

### Contracted Services

When communicating with contracted service providers, consider what aspects of your regular service will be changing (school lunch menu, busing services, etc.)

### Communication to Staff

- Expectations on how they will report their attendance
- Expectations around staff presence at each building
Tribal Considerations

As we make decisions, we are coordinating with local and regional Tribal leaders. North Dakota Tribal Governments are sovereign nations and they maintain a unique political status. Each will be making decisions based on what is best for their tribal members. We are aware of how ND school closures may impact Tribal communities and Tribal Nations. This school closure plan provides unique opportunities to the state, school districts, schools and local governmental agencies to meet the needs of all North Dakotans. School districts should consult with local Tribal leaders, city and county governmental agencies, volunteer organizations and private sector companies to ascertain how students’ needs will be identified and met. This may include mental health needs, resource distribution, and educational opportunities in your communities. These considerations offer the opportunity to ensure families and Tribal Nations are meaningfully engaged in solutions and the implementation of services for our students.

For assistance, work with your Home School Liaison, Indian Education staff, and parent committee.

Contact NDDPI Office of Indian/Multicultural Education for a list of Tribal Education Directors.

Guidance on Foundation Aid and Transportation Aid During the Coronavirus Outbreak

Foundation Aid is calculated using membership hours. Membership hours are calculated using the number of hours a student is present plus the number of hours the student is absent. Students can only be a member of one school at a time and students cannot generate a foundation aid payment exceeding 1.00 per pupil payment. Students are deemed to be members of the school during the week of March 16th - 20th per the executive order issued by Governor Burgum March 16th and school districts will be paid accordingly.

The 2019-20 membership hours will be used to calculate the 2020-21 Foundation Aid Payment. To date, 92% of the state aid payment for the 2019-20 school year has been distributed to school districts with the final 8% being distributed by April 1st. Any changes to the 2019-20 instructional hours will not affect the current year payment. If a district’s instructional hours plus any time forgiven by the Governor is less than 962.5 hours for elementary or 1050 hours for middle and high school students, the 2020-21 payment will be adjusted accordingly.

Transportation funding will be calculated using miles and rides district’s report on their June 30th transportation report pending any additional executive orders.

- Miles and rides are to be reported for transporting rural and in city students between home and school, special education routes transporting students between home and school or school to school, and Career and Technical Education routes transporting students between home and school or school to school.

Broadband Access

List of broadband providers by county (with contact information): https://broadbandnow.com/North-Dakota