



COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO HEALTH AGENCY

PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Michael Hill *Health Agency Director*

Penny Borenstein, MD, MPH *Health Officer/Public Health Director*

Dear School Leaders in San Luis Obispo County:

San Luis Obispo County has been on the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) County Data Monitoring (CDM) List since July 16, 2020 due to an exceedance of the number of 100 cases of COVID-19 per 100,000 population. On July 17, Governor Gavin Newsom announced that if a county has been on the monitoring list within the last 14 days, a school must conduct distance learning only, until the county has been off the monitoring list for at least 14 days.

The State has since replaced the CDM with a colored tier framework that lays out the measures that each county must meet, based on indicators that capture disease burden, testing, and health equity. CDPH guidance allows counties in Purple Tier 1, the most restrictive, to allow schools to request a waiver from the local health officer to open for in-person instruction for elementary grades only.

The justification for such waivers is based on the current best available scientific evidence which shows that COVID-19 related risks in schools serving elementary age students are lower than and different from the risks to staff and students in schools serving older students. In particular, there appears to be lower risk of child-to-child or child-to-adult transmission in children under 12, and the risk of infection and serious illness in elementary school children is particularly low. By contrast, the health-related risks for elementary age children who are not provided in-person instruction are significant, including lower rates of immunizations, higher rates of undetected child abuse and neglect, and other indicators of public health and wellbeing.

Moreover, in-person instruction is academically and socially critical for younger students, in alignment with State standards. Students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds are particularly harmed by a lack of access to in-person instruction. Schools serving elementary school students are also in a better position to put into place effective risk-reduction strategies to protect both teachers and students, including creation of small, stable classroom cohorts. Further, elementary school students without access to in-person school are far more likely than older students to require alternative group childcare arrangements when schools are closed, and as such, closure of elementary schools is less likely to significantly reduce transmission.

How to Apply

The superintendent (or equivalent for charter or private schools) must consult with labor, parent, and community organizations before submitting each school's waiver application. The local health officer then reviews the application, along with local community epidemiological data, and consults with CDPH about the request.

Public Health Department

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To apply for a waiver, please complete and submit the following documents:

- Application Cover Form
- Attestation Form
- Application Checklist
- School Reopening Plan for Elementary Grades

Reopening plans must address all the components in the Application Checklist and the guidelines in the most recent [Schools and School-Based Programs guidance from CDPH](#).

If a school district is applying for a waiver for multiple schools, please indicate all school names on the Application Cover Form and identify any site-specific components in the plan.

Applications and all supporting documents should be submitted at least 14 days prior to the desired reopening date to EOC-Schools@co.slo.ca.us.

Sincerely,



Penny Borenstein, MD, MPH
Health Officer and Public Health Director
County of San Luis Obispo