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Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services plan

3 messages

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Local Education Agencies (LEAs) have done a phenomenal job of creating their Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services plans as required by the U.S. Department of Education (ED). These plans, which pertain to American Rescue Plan (ARP) Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds, had to be posted on an LEA's website (with the URL webpage address provided to ISBE) within 30 days after an allocation was received. This letter is intended to remind you, as we enter the new school year, to consider revising your plans.

We know that you have been reviewing your plans over the past year and suspect that there may changes to them for the coming school year. The ED mandate requires LEAs to review and amend, if necessary, plans no less than every six months. If you do make changes to your Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services plans, please be consistent with Section 2001(i)(2) of the ARP Act, which requires an LEA to seek:

- Public comment on the development of its plan.
- Public input and take such input into account in determining whether to revise its plan and, if it determines revisions are necessary, on the revisions it makes to its plan.

Section 2001(i)(1) of the ARP Act requires each LEA that receives ARP ESSER funds to develop and make publicly available on its website, within 30 days after receiving such allocations, Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services plans for all schools, including those that have already returned to in-person instruction. Section 2001(i)(2) of the ARP Act further requires that the LEA seek public comment on the plan and take those comments into account in the development of the plans.

As a reminder, ED states that the LEA's plans must include:

- How the LEA will maintain the health and safety of students, educators, and other school and LEA staff. They should describe any policies – and the extent to which the LEA has adopted such policies -- on the safety recommendations made by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, including:
 - Universal and correct wearing of masks.
 - Modifying facilities to allow for physical distancing (e.g., use of cohorts/podding).
 - Handwashing and respiratory etiquette.
 - Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation.
 - Developing contact tracing (in combination with isolation and quarantine) rules in collaboration with state, local, territorial, or tribal health departments; diagnostic and screening testing; efforts to provide vaccinations to school communities.
 - Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to health and safety policies.
 - Coordination with state and local health officials.
- The plan must describe how the LEA will ensure continuity of services, including, but not limited to, services to address:
 - Students' academic needs.
 - Social, emotional, and mental health of students and staff.
 - Other needs, which may include student health and food services.

If you have any questions regarding these ED requirements, please contact the ISBE Title Grants Department.