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Fwd: Updates to Statewide COVID-19 Policies; Public School Communicable Disease Planning for the 2023-24 School Year

Derek Fialkiewicz <dfialkiewicz@corbett.k12.or.us>

Wed, May 10, 2023 at 9:55 AM

To: Robin Faye Lindeen Blakeley <rlindeen@corbett.k12.or.us>, Nancy G <ngyerko@corbett.k12.or.us>

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Oregon Department of Education** <ode@public.govdelivery.com>

Date: Wed, May 10, 2023 at 9:45 AM

Subject: Updates to Statewide COVID-19 Policies; Public School Communicable Disease Planning for the 2023-24 School Year

To: <dfialkiewicz@corbett.k12.or.us>

Having trouble viewing this email? [View it as a Web page.](#)**To:** Superintendents, Communicable Disease Preparedness Liaisons, K-12 Public Information Officers, Charter School Leaders**From:** Colt Gill, Director, Oregon Department of Education**Date:** May 10, 2023**Re:** Updates to Statewide COVID-19 Policies; Public School Communicable Disease Planning for the 2023-24 School Year

Dear School District Leaders,

Today we are sharing resources and tools for district and school-level communicable disease management planning for the 2023-24 school year. Utilizing a communicable disease planning template at the school-level that is updated annually, reflects a core learning from the pandemic, and aligns with [a recent independent evaluation of Oregon's public health system response to the pandemic](#) which recommended:

- Investing in comprehensive emergency preparedness.
- Continuing to invest in partnerships between the education and public health sectors.
- Clearly defining roles and expectations involved in response to a communicable disease event.
- Coordinating messaging across public health and education sectors.

The tools and template linked in this message are updated versions of the tools and templates currently in use at the school-level.

Assurances regarding readiness of schools to respond to communicable disease events during the 2023-24 school year are due to the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) before the start of the district's school year or by August 25, 2023, whichever is sooner.

School-level communicable disease planning for the forthcoming school year **refines the template and instructions from last year to:**

- **Decrease template length** and reduce redundancy.
- **Expand the focus** to all communicable disease planning which encompasses respiratory viruses as well as other diseases that schools may have to tackle.
- **Create flexibility** to leverage planning completed for Aligning for Student Success into communicable disease plans.

Districts, schools, or programs may use any format that best supports local planning and alignment while ensuring that the plan includes the content and components laid out in the template.

This communication includes:

- Updates on changing statewide COVID-19 policies.
- School-Level communicable disease plan requirements for the 2023-24 school year.
- Links to a template, and instructions and tools available for districts and schools to use to meet these requirements.
- Link to the Smartsheet submission for assurances.
- Link to join Office Hours on Monday, May 15.

What is changing?

As the COVID-19 public health emergency unwinds, schools will experience the following changes, **effective May 11, 2023.**

- **Several sources of COVID-19 data will end.** Oregon Health Authority (OHA) will be archiving several COVID-19 dashboards and CDC will be retiring several COVID-19 metrics, including COVID-19 Community Levels. **Schools are encouraged to track [COVID-19 transmission using the Oregon Health Authority's data dashboards](#) and to update school-level plans accordingly.** OHA's [COVID-19 surveillance data](#) will focus on statewide transmission trends, data on severity, and most county-level data will no longer be available. ODE will share updates regarding data as CDC and OHA make changes this spring and summer. [County level immunization rates](#) remain available.
- The Oregon Department of Education will no longer notify districts of medium and high community transmission of COVID-19.
- **A five-day period of isolation for those infected with COVID-19 will also no longer be recommended** for the general population, including people in K-12

education settings. Oregon public health officials believe widespread population immunity due to vaccination and repeated infections means most COVID-19 infections are now likely asymptomatic or mildly symptomatic, and the five-day isolation period is doing little to reduce transmission. **The recommendation for the general population will be to stay home until fever free for 24 hours and symptoms are improving; to avoid contact with individuals at increased risk for severe disease, including older adults and those with underlying medical conditions; and to consider masking for 10 days.**

Effective June 17 the COVID-19 vaccination requirement for public and private school teachers, staff and school volunteers (OAR 333-019-1030) will be lifted. This means that after June 16, teachers, school staff and volunteers in schools will no longer have to provide proof of vaccination or have a valid medical or religious exception on file to be in direct or indirect contact with students. Being up to date on COVID-19 vaccines continues to offer significant protection against serious illness and hospitalization.

COVID-19 diagnostic testing resources (e.g., Abbott BinaxNOW test kits) **will remain available** through the 2023-24 academic year. iHealth self-tests will remain available until the current supply is exhausted. Additional information regarding testing in Oregon's K-12 schools is available [here](#). The **screening testing program** in Oregon's K-12 schools **will end July 31, 2023.**

What is the same for the 2023-24 school year?

Over the past three school years, schools and districts prepared Operational Blueprints (SY 2020-21), Safe Return to In-Person Instruction & Continuity of Services Plans (SY 2021-22) and School-level COVID-19 Management Plans (SY 2022-23). This year's School-level Communicable Disease Management Plan builds upon the lessons learned over the last three years, including responding to the lasting equity and mental health impacts of communicable disease events.

The School-level Communicable Disease Management Plan combines the requirement for a Safe Return to In-Person Instruction & Continuity of Services Plan required by the American Rescue Plan Act and the requirement for a communicable disease management plan under Oregon Administrative Rule (OAR) 581-022-2220. The template remains aligned with other operational plans, emergency plans, and district communicable disease management plans already in place and will assist in the development and ongoing improvement of key operations during times when communicable diseases surge in our schools. With appropriate planning and prevention strategies in place, schools can minimize exclusions and ensure that all students have access to a full school year.

Who must complete a School-level Communicable Disease Management Plan?

For the 2023-24 school year, under Section 2001(i)(1) of the ARP ESSER and the US Department of Education's Interim Final Requirements for Safe Return/Continuity of Services Plan, **Education Service Districts, school districts and public charter schools must ensure that every public school and program has a completed School-level Communicable Disease Management Plan** by submitting a set of assurances.

The School-level Communicable Disease Management Plan verifies the school or program is ready to:

- Prevent, detect, respond to, and recover from a communicable disease event.
- Ensure continuity of instruction for all students, regardless of support needs.
- Ensure continuity of learning during and after a communicable disease event.
- Communicate their plan to their staff, students, families, and community.

Template Instructions and Tools

ODE, the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) and the Oregon School Nurses Association (OSNA) co-developed the 2022-23 template from which this 2023-24 template is built. This year's template is a modification of the 2022-23 template based on feedback from school leaders and OHA, and OSNA. **Districts, schools, or programs may use any format that best supports local planning and alignment while ensuring that the plan includes the content and components laid out in the template.** You are encouraged to:

- [Visit the ODE website where you will find the template, instructions, and highlighted changes from the 2022-23 school year.](#)
- Review the PDF of changes made to the template from the 2022-23 plan template as the most straightforward way to make updates to your current plan.
- Download the [fillable MS Word Template](#).
- Read the [Template Instructions](#).

Submitting Assurances, no later than August 25, 2023

Before the start of the 2023-24 school year or no later than August 25, 2023, [Districts, ESDs, and public charter schools will submit to the Oregon Department of Education a set of assurances](#) that:

- A School-Level Communicable Disease Management Plan is in place for every public school, public charter school, or program that is not covered by a school plan (including a link to where these plans are available to the public).
- [Schools engaged an intentional process to center equity and mental health and well-being in School-level Communicable Disease Management Plan.](#) Commitment to regularly train school staff in the School-level Communicable Disease Management Plan.
- A link to the district's communicable disease management plan.
- District has an up-to-date emergency operations plan.
- Certifications required for ESSSER III funding via the Safe Return plan.

Planning Support

[Oregon Department of Education will hold office hours from 3:30-4:30 p.m. on Monday, May 15](#) to review this requirement, give an overview of the **School-level Communicable Disease Management Plan template and answer questions about the process.** [These office hours will be recorded and posted as well.](#) Additionally, representatives from your Education Service District will be offering training and support for fall planning in the coming weeks.

Hopefully, the 2023-24 school year begins to feel typical and regular, as schools have built operational muscle to manage communicable disease and are prepared to welcome students and staff every school day without interruption. Taking time now, and in the fall, to update and train into School-level Communicable Disease Management Plans is a concrete step to support this goal and will become more and more routine over the next years.

Questions related to the communicable disease planning for the 2023-24 school year can be sent to ODE's new support inbox, ODE.HealthySchools@ode.oregon.gov (formerly ODECOVID19@ode.oregon.gov).

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