



June 8, 2020

Greetings School District Leaders and Board Members,

We sincerely thank you for your leadership and dedication to keep your students and educators healthy and safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. We know this is a huge undertaking and we value your efforts.

The [Colorado Alliance for School Health](#) is led by Children's Hospital Colorado (CHCO) and members include: the Colorado Association of School-Based Health Care (CASBHC), the Colorado Association of School Boards (CASB), the Colorado Association of School Executives (CASE), the Colorado Behavioral Healthcare Council (CBHC), the Colorado Dental Association (CDA), the Colorado Department of Education (CDE), the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDHPHE), the Colorado Education Association (CEA), the Colorado Rural Schools Alliance, the Colorado School Medicaid Consortium, Every Child Pediatrics and Immunize Colorado. The Alliance aims to transform how healthcare and education partners collaborate to support physical and behavioral health for youth and young people across Colorado.

We know the [draft guidelines for school reopening for the 2020-2021 school year](#) that the Colorado Department of Education issued on May 26, 2020 could be challenging to implement, especially at this time of impending budget cuts. However, as your district makes plans to reopen – whether that be in-person, virtual, or a hybrid – we seek to partner with you to ensure students show up healthy and ready to learn.

First, we've heard that some parents believe healthcare clinics and hospitals are unsafe right now. The truth is, with the additional access controls that have been enacted by clinics and hospitals, these are among the safest places in our communities. There are serious risks in delaying preventative care for kids, such as the possibility of an outbreak of a vaccine preventable disease like [measles](#). Other common undiagnosed health conditions that could hinder learning are [tooth decay](#) and [vision or hearing impairments](#). It is uncertain when common school-based health screenings, such as hearing, vision and dental, will resume. The best alternative at this time is for these screenings to be conducted within a comprehensive well-child check by a primary care provider and a routine checkup at a dental clinic. Many school districts throughout Colorado have [school-based health centers](#); they offer affordable care for physical, oral and mental health services. Colorado also has a network of [low-cost healthcare clinics](#).

→ *In your parent-facing communications, please encourage families to prioritize [well-child checks](#), [immunizations](#) and regular [dental exams](#). Help assure them that healthcare clinics are safe and open to care for their children.*

Second, we know that personal protective equipment (PPE) is in short supply and that it is an added expense no one has planned for. Some resources we have found that may help are:

- *The Colorado Association of School Boards (CASB) endorses [BuyBoard](#), a purchasing cooperative; their intent is to pool their buying powers to save money for school districts and other government agencies.*
- *[Energize Colorado](#), a nonprofit that has recently emerged, aims to provide PPE to small businesses and nonprofits to assist with their reopening.*
- *Federal supplies of PPE are distributed to state public health departments who in-turn distribute to local (county-level) public health agencies. If you have not already reached out to your local public health agency for PPE, we recommend that you connect with them.*

Third, we are facing a situation where nearly all students will be coping with trauma from extended social isolation, the loss of loved ones, or increased poverty and economic instability. There will be continued trauma and distress experienced by students and staff that will persist when schools reopen. Evidence-based [social emotional learning \(SEL\) curricula](#), SEL professional development for educators and implementing [universal screening](#) are ways to identify and support students who have unmet behavioral health needs. Many schools across Colorado partner with community mental health centers (CMHC) to deliver behavioral healthcare and supports within the school environment, and we know that many of those partnerships have had to shift or be disrupted due to the impact of the pandemic. CMHCs across the state have transitioned to virtual care, and new opportunities for partnerships with schools in creative ways are forming each day. We know that school resources to address the increased need will be stretched thin in the coming year(s).

→ *We would like to learn more about how your district is addressing those needs and discover ways that the Alliance could help.*

Finally, we would like to invite you to participate in an ECHO learning series for school reopening, led by Children's Hospital Colorado. These learning sessions are 60 minutes in length, occur bi-weekly via Zoom and will continue throughout the summer (at a minimum). The next session will be Thursday, June 18 from 3:00 PM to 4:00 PM. Each session will address the latest epidemiology trends, emerging research and current public health orders, then focus on a specialized topic.

Upcoming topics may include: implementation resources for CDE guidance; protocol development around PPE supplies, storage and use by staff and students; supporting students social emotional learning and behavioral health needs; supporting students with chronic conditions and protecting vulnerable populations; school nursing considerations for health rooms and monitoring trends in student illness; athletics and activities; and, mandatory reporting in virtual or hybrid learning environments. Topics will be scheduled in response to stakeholder feedback and as public health orders evolve. We have access to experts in these areas through the Alliance membership and at Children's Hospital Colorado; we want to support you however we can. If there are other topics you are interested in, please reach out.

- To register, visit <https://projectcore.echocolorado.org/Series/Registration/274>
- *In the field for your district name, please include: "[district name] /Colorado Alliance for School Health" so we can track the response to this invitation.*
 - *Following your registration, you will receive calendar invites that will include the Zoom links and agenda topic(s) for each session.*

On behalf of the Colorado Alliance for School Health, thank you for your partnership in planning for the safe return of students to school. If you would like to discuss further or if you have questions, please feel free to contact Susan Goldenstein at 720-777-4807 or susan.goldenstein@childrenscolorado.org.

Sincerely,

The Colorado Alliance for School Health