

NEWS BRIEF

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CDC Relaxes 6-foot Physical Distancing Rule to Encourage School Reopenings

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently updated its [operational strategy](#) for K-12 schools, relaxing physical distancing rules. This decision was designed to encourage school reopenings, as 6-foot physical distancing has been a major barrier to in-person learning for many schools.

The agency cited evidence that physical distancing of at least 3 feet between students can safely be adopted in classroom settings where mask use is universal and other prevention measures are taken.

According to the CDC's updated guidance:

- In elementary schools, students should be at least 3 feet apart.
- In middle schools and high schools, students should be at least 3 feet apart in areas of low, moderate or substantial community transmission. In areas of high community transmission, middle school and high school students should be 6 feet apart if cohorting is not possible. (Cohorting is when groups of students are kept together with the same peers and staff throughout the school day to reduce the risk of spread throughout the school.)

In addition, the CDC recommends maintaining 6-foot physical distancing:

- Between adults (teachers and staff), and between adults and students
- When masks cannot be worn, such as when eating
- During activities such as singing, shouting, band, or sports and exercise

- In common areas such as school lobbies and auditoriums
- In community settings outside of the classroom

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“[The] CDC is committed to leading with science and updating our guidance as new evidence emerges,” said CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky. “Safe in-person instruction gives our kids access to critical social and mental health services that prepare them for the future, in addition to the education they need to succeed.”

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What This Means

The CDC's K-12 operational strategy is not a federal mandate, but is instead a “roadmap” based on best available evidence and ongoing findings. Although many schools have reopened in some capacity, school reopenings vary by locality and are determined by local officials.

For more information on school reopenings, individuals should monitor local media. We will keep you apprised of any notable updates.

