



Many district administrators and educators have raised questions about developing a Preparedness Plan to ensure the safe reopening of our schools. To create and maintain safe school communities, district leaders, building leaders, teachers, staff members, and a variety of stakeholders must work collaboratively and intentionally to craft a successful school reopening plan. To accomplish this, districts need to strictly adhere to the Governor’s Executive Order and take all reasonable safety precautions backed by science, data, and public health evidence. Collaboration, collective accountability and efficient communication are key elements. With this in mind, our organizations—educators, superintendents, administrators, and school board members—came together with input from members of the Governor’s Return to School Advisory Council to develop this guidance for local school districts to use as they work to develop their Preparedness Plan. Moving forward together will ensure that school communities provide a quality education and safe environments for all students and staff members.

### **Districts Administration Should Create a Plan Preparedness Committee to Foster Collaboration among Administrators and Employees**

District administrators should immediately create a Preparedness Plan committee charged with developing the district’s Preparedness Plan. The committee shall be composed of district administrators, building leaders, educators and support staff. Where there is union representation, union leadership for teachers and support staff shall be included. School board members, parents, and student representatives may also be included.

### **As the District’s Preparedness Plan is Developed and Submitted to the Public, Transparency and Accountability are Key**

The safety and welfare of students and staff must be the top priority when developing the district’s Preparedness Plan. To the extent feasible, it is strongly advised that “highly recommended” and “recommended” protocols be adopted in districts’ Preparedness Plans because they are rooted in science and public health evidence. The Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators (MAISA), General Education Leadership Network (GELN), the Michigan Department of Education (MDE), MASA, and

MASB joint [template](#) provides a helpful example of how to present those decisions. Upon adoption, the district shall post the approved Preparedness Plan on the front page of the district's website, along with a document listing the rationale for excluding any "highly recommended" protocols.

### **Districts and Unions Must Work Together to Ensure a Successful School Reopening**

Given the Preparedness Plan's time-sensitive nature, bargaining that pertains to these items should be expedited to ensure a smooth and successful reopening. Pursuant to [Exec. Order No. 2020-142](#) (June 30, 2020) and the [MI Safe Schools Return to Schools Roadmap](#), the Preparedness Plan must be consistent with the district's Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA). Letters of Agreement (LOAs) or Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) should be developed and executed as appropriate. Under the Public Employees Relations Act (MCL 423.201 through 423.217), where the implementation of the Preparedness Plan impacts mandatory subjects of collective bargaining, including rates of pay, wages, hours of employment or other conditions of employment, the District must collectively bargain the impact.

### **Once a School District Adopts a Preparedness Plan It Must be Executed**

It is imperative that all districts strictly enforce the requirements and recommendations adopted in their Preparedness Plan. To increase compliance, communication is critical. It is the district's responsibility to educate staff, students, and parents on the Preparedness Plan so safety protocols and expectations are clear. Districts shall use existing informal and formal communication practices and procedures to timely address and respond to concerns from staff, parents, and students regarding the Preparedness Plan and its implementation.

**In consultation with the Michigan Return to School Advisory Council, below are responses to some additional questions that have been raised by educators and district leaders:**

- 1. Who is considered a "high-risk" employee and a "high-risk" student?**
  - A. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control identifies two populations who are disproportionately vulnerable to COVID-19: Adults [age 65 and older](#), and individuals with certain [pre-existing conditions](#).

**2. How should districts accommodate vulnerable teachers and staff due to COVID-19?**

A. During this uncertain time, teachers and staff may be understandably hesitant to return to work, either out of fear for their own health or transmitting it to their loved ones. This is especially true for the two populations CDC has identified as disproportionately vulnerable and those who live with high-risk individuals. In supporting teachers and other staff beyond complying with federal, state, and local requirements, school districts should permit alternative work arrangements to these staff members. The Return to School Advisory Council policy subcommittee and the Governor's Office will continue to address this issue.

**3. What is being done to protect district budgets with respect to per pupil funding?**

A. The sole purpose of the Preparedness Plan is to ensure that school communities provide a quality education and safe environments for all students and staff members. The Preparedness Plan shall not be utilized as a strategy and tool for districts to purposefully recruit students from other districts. In addition to the adverse impacts of funding to school communities, this practice can be disruptive to the continuity of learning for students. Potential solutions, including legislative actions, will be discussed by the Governor's Office and the Return to School Advisory Council policy subcommittee.

**4. What are acceptable forms of 'facial coverings'? Are face shields acceptable?**

A. We understand that the acceptable forms of 'facial coverings,' will be addressed by MDHHS, MDE, and the Governor's Office in a forthcoming FAQ.

**5. How should districts coordinate with their local health department to execute the district's Preparedness Plan?**

A. We understand that the Return to School Advisory Council Public Health Subcommittee and MDHHS will provide additional recommendations and guidance about strategies for districts and local public health officers to collaborate, including executing screening protocols, testing protocols, and protocols following positive COVID-19 tests among students and staff.

**6. How do we execute safety protocols given our current custodial staff levels?**

- A. Adherence to the cleaning protocols is crucial to the safety and welfare of students and staff. If a district is unable to comply with those protocols, it will jeopardize their ability to reopen schools for in-person instruction.

**7. How do Districts address the need for additional substitute teachers?**

- A. Similarly, ensuring quality education throughout the school year in all phases is a priority, especially in the event substitute teachers are needed. We also recognize that there may be shortages among support staff as well. Districts are encouraged to leverage community resources including recruiting retired teachers and partnering with local universities to utilize student teachers who qualify under existing law as paid substitutes. The Return to School Advisory Council policy subcommittee and the Governor's Office will continue to address this issue.

**8. Would this Preparedness Committee be subject to the Open Meetings Act (MCL 15.261 through 15.275)?**

- A. Committees appointed by district leadership are not subject to the Open Meetings Act. However, we agree that the committee's work must be as transparent as possible. It is also important to note that school board meetings, including when plans will be discussed and approved, continue to be subject to the Open Meetings Act.