



Southern Westchester BOCES Health and Safety Guide



Last updated: Aug. 29, 2022

Schools & Locations

Administration Building, Rye Brook, NY

Program Offices, Adult Education and the Lower Hudson Regional Information Center, Harrison, NY

Center for Special Services - K-12

Tappan Hill School, Tarrytown, NY

Valhalla Center, Valhalla, NY

Rye Lake Campus, White Plains, NY

St. Matthew's School, White Plains, NY

Irvington High School, Irvington, NY

Career Services Campus - K-12, Valhalla, NY

Center for Adult & Community Services

Sprain Brook Academy, Westchester County Jail, Valhalla, NY - HS and Adult Ed

St. Gabriel's School, New Rochelle, NY - Adult Education

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Stakeholders

The following stakeholders were engaged in the Health & Safety Guide development process through meetings, surveys or correspondence and will remain partners throughout its implementation.

SWBOCES Board of Education

John Filiberti, Board of Education President
Robert Johnson, Board of Education Vice President
Sheryl Brady
Lynn Frazer-McBride
Nilesh Jain
Eileen Miller
Joan Weber

SWBOCES Executive Team

Harold A. Coles, Psy.D., District Superintendent
Brendan Lyons, Ed. D., Deputy Superintendent/Chief Operating Officer
Ellen McDonnell, Executive Director, Lower Hudson Regional Information Center
James A. Gratto Jr., Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services
Stephen Tibbetts, Assistant Superintendent for Business

SWBOCES COVID Response Team

Brendan Lyons, Ed.D., Deputy Superintendent/Chief Operating Officer
Ellen McDonnell, Ed.D., Executive Director, Lower Hudson Regional Information Center
James A. Gratto Jr., Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services
Stephen Tibbetts, Assistant Superintendent for Business
Suzanne Doherty, Director of Human Resources
Tom Briggs, Director of Operations & Maintenance
Brandon Cruz, Supervisor of School Safety
Brian Howard, Director of Communications
Dahlia Jackson, Director of Career Services
Jesse Merchant, Assistant Director of Interscholastic Athletics
Victor Pineiro, Director of Technology
Andrea Byrne, Director of Special Services
Jessica Walker, Assistant Director of Special Services
Tracy Racicot, Director of Adult & Community Services

Stakeholder and Resource partners

Westchester County Department of Health
Southern Westchester BOCES Component School Districts
Regional Pupil Personnel Directors
New York State BOCES Leaders
Southern Westchester BOCES Leadership Team, Staff, Students, Parents, Community Partners, and State Partners

Introduction

As we enter a new phase of the pandemic, increased access to COVID-19 information, vaccination, testing, and treatment, the New York State Education Department and the New York State Department of Health have changed their guidance, providing school districts and BOCES with greater flexibility as we begin the 2022-2023 school year. This document reflects the most updated guidance (linked below) from the CDC, NYSDOH, and NYSED as of August 2022. It reflects an overall relaxation of requirements related to COVID response.

- [CDC Guidance, Aug. 11, 2022](#)
- [NYSDOH/NYSED FAQs for 2022-2023 School Year](#)
- [NYSDOH/NYSED Letter, Aug. 22, 2022](#)

Ongoing Response to COVID as a Potential Public Health Concern

Southern Westchester BOCES offers programming at numerous centers and within component districts, where component districts serve as hosts for our programming. Closure of programming will be taken very seriously, considering multiple factors that include: presence of or potential presence of COVID-19 within one of our programs or at or within one of our host districts, absentee rates of faculty, staff, and students, as well as determinations made by the NYS Department of Health, NYSED, the Westchester County Department of Health and the COVID response team. Collaboration with the Westchester County Department of Health will be ongoing, and decision making will be data-informed.

Southern Westchester BOCES will cooperate with state and local health departments and follow all requirements of those departments as well as the New York State Education Department. The Director of Human Resources will serve as the COVID-19 Resource Contact Person for these agencies.

The COVID response team will continue to serve as a resource and provide leadership. A member of that team, the District Deputy Superintendent/COO, will serve as COVID-19 Safety Coordinator. Because SWBOCES has multiple divisions and almost 1,000 employees, it is important that there is a resource person to support each division. Executive Team members will serve this role for their divisions, working closely with the Director of Human Resources, who will remain the primary contact with the Westchester Department of Health. Each member of the SWBOCES Leadership team will be responsible for responding to daily concerns, assuring systems are working well to operationalize the processes and protocols in this SWBOCES Health and Safety Guide and assist members of their teams in understanding guidance and the district plan.

Health & Safety

At this time, the requirement for maintaining social distancing and contact tracing has been discontinued.

Personal Protective Equipment

The state requirement for universal masking in P-12 school settings ended on March 2, 2022. Individuals who have been diagnosed COVID-positive must wear a mask on return to work/school through day 10 following diagnosis. Masks will continue to be available in each building for those who wish to use them. Additional PPE may be requested.

Additional circumstances where masks are recommended include the following:

- Individuals who feel more comfortable wearing a mask for personal reasons.
- Individuals, regardless of vaccination status, who were exposed or potentially exposed for 10 days in indoor settings.
- Moderately-to-severely immunocompromised individuals who have discussed the need to mask with their healthcare provider(s).

Whenever persons are required to wear a mask due to a positive diagnosis, masks may be removed when eating, drinking, singing, going outside or playing a wind instrument. However, when masks are removed for these purposes, physical distancing of 6 or more feet should be maintained to the extent possible.

Hand Hygiene

Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer when soap and water are not available.

Key times to clean hands include:

- Before and after the school/workday
- Before and after work breaks or recess
- After blowing nose, coughing, or sneezing
- After using the restroom
- Before eating or preparing food
- After putting on, touching, or removing masks/face coverings

Hand sanitizer will be provided in wall dispensers and near copiers and printers.

Staff and students should sanitize their hands and surfaces of shared equipment/items before and after use (i.e. copier/printer, microwaves, etc.). Sanitizing wipes will be provided.

Additional Space Considerations for Safety

Health offices in student programs will continue to designate an isolation area to allow for separation of symptomatic students from those receiving other health services.

Facilities Practices

Cleaning Protocols

All occupied spaces will be cleaned and disinfected daily, more frequently if required. Facilities staff will use high-performance cleaning and disinfecting products (COVID-approved) and methods.

Cleaning products will be supplied to classrooms as requested. Staff-supplied cleaning products are not allowed.

Alcohol-based hand sanitizer dispensers are available in multiple locations at all SWBOCES sites.

Ongoing Maintenance

All ventilation systems have been assessed and are operating as designed. Filters have been upgraded to the highest practical MERV rating. Continued monitoring and maintenance will take place as appropriate.

Movement within Buildings

The CDC recommends that staff, students and visitors stay home if they have COVID-related symptoms. All staff and students will be provided with guidance stating that they should remain at home if they are symptomatic or have been asked to quarantine.

Staff and students are asked to continuously self-monitor for COVID-related issues. Individuals who test positive should send a blank email to COVIDalerts@swboces.org for staff or to Healthupdates@swboces.org for students. You will receive a response directing you how to proceed. Both emails are monitored during regular work hours. Any individual who has tested positive for COVID is not permitted to enter an SWBOCES program or facility until cleared by Human Resources or a school nurse. Any individual who has been a close contact of a positive individual, regardless of vaccination status, should follow the recommended [state guidance](#).

COVID Protocols

Surveillance Testing

Surveillance testing is no longer required to be conducted. Southern Westchester BOCES will not participate in surveillance testing. Take-home rapid tests will be provided to students and staff as supplies are available from New York State.

Required Reporting of a Positive COVID Test

Parents who learn that their child is COVID-positive should contact the district by sending an email to healthupdates@swboces.org. The parent/guardian should send a blank email to the address, then respond to the return email by completing the form. Administrators will monitor this email during regular school hours, and a response will be sent accordingly. The student may not come on campus until they receive clearance from the school nurse or district administrator.

Employees who are COVID-positive must notify SWBOCES by using the following designated email, covidalerts@swboces.org. The employee should send a blank email to the address, then respond to the return email by completing the form. A member of the COVID Response Team will monitor this email during regular school hours and respond accordingly. The employee may not come on campus until they receive clearance from the HR Department.

Staff and students who are symptomatic should not be on SWBOCES campuses and should follow [recommended guidance](#) for monitoring illness that is potentially COVID-related.

If a staff member or student has tested positive for COVID-19 they are cleared to return to work once they meet the CDC guidelines for ending isolation. This information can be found by using the following link: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/isolation.html>.

Protocol for Return to Work/School

SWBOCES' Health & Safety Guide has written protocols that comply with DOH and CDC guidance for the return to school of students and staff following a positive test for COVID-19.

- Students, teachers and staff who test positive for COVID-19 but never develop symptoms should isolate for at least 5 days. (Day 0 is the day the positive test was conducted and day 1 is the first full day after the specimen was collected for the positive test.) If they continue to have no symptoms, they can end isolation after at least 5 days. Asymptomatic, positive individuals should wear a well-fitting mask at all times for ten days. If symptoms develop, positive individuals should then follow the guidance for being symptomatic and positive.
- Students, teachers and staff who are COVID-19 positive and have or had symptoms should isolate for at least 5 days. (To calculate the 5-day isolation period, day 0 is the first day of symptoms. Day 1 is the first full day after symptoms develop.) If the individual has improved symptoms and is fever free for 24 hours or more without the use

of fever-reducing medicine, they may end isolation at the end of five full days. Individuals should continue to wear a well-fitting mask at all times for ten days.

- If individuals are COVID-19 positive, have or had symptoms (which may include fever) that have not improved after 5 days of isolation, they must continue isolation. Isolation continues until symptoms have improved and the individual is fever-free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medicine. Once cleared to return, individuals should continue to wear a well-fitting mask at all times for ten days.
- Individuals that have been exposed to a COVID positive individual, regardless of vaccination status, may remain in school. It is recommended to wear a well-fitting mask for 10 days from last exposure and undergo [recommended testing](#).
- A NYS COVID benefit for staff is available in limited circumstances and can only be applied in qualifying situations and require the confirmation of a positive COVID test result or an order of quarantine. The NYS COVID benefit is only available for employees with a positive COVID test result or order of isolation or order of quarantine from the Department of Health. Employee sick days should be utilized for all other non-qualifying issues.

If employees/students become sick with COVID-19 symptoms while at the workplace, they must be sent home immediately and follow the guidance above.

Medically Vulnerable High Risk Staff & Students

SWBOCES is committed to providing a safe work and learning environment for staff and students. SWBOCES recognizes that certain populations are considered at increased risk from COVID-19. The CDC has issued guidance on groups that are at increased risk and may require additional accommodations beyond the safety measures already put in place. [Please refer to CDC guidance here for more information](#).

Any staff member with an underlying condition that puts them at increased risk may request a possible accommodation. The process is as follows:

- Employee will notify Human Resources of their request for an accommodation.
- Employee will complete and return to Human Resources an Accommodation Form, which includes information provided by their health care provider.
- Human Resources will schedule a meeting with the employee to discuss work duties and possible reasonable accommodation.
- Human Resources will schedule a meeting with the employee's supervisor to review essential functions of the job and possible reasonable accommodations.
- Human Resources will meet with the employee to discuss reasonable accommodations and follow up with a final decision via letter.

Students with special needs, or who may be medically fragile or have underlying health conditions or concerns, may not be able to adhere to safety protocols such as use of face coverings, social distancing, or hand hygiene. School Nurses will work directly with individual students and their families to identify how best to meet the child's needs at school, while continuing to protect their health and safety. Also included in the development of individual

student plans will be the principal, teachers, clinicians and related service providers and the child's health care provider, as appropriate.

Social Emotional Well Being

SWBOCES is committed to enhancing our school community by acknowledging the necessity to take care of ourselves and each other, physically and emotionally. Activities and resources to do this are embedded throughout the organization.

Social Emotional Well Being of Staff

SWBOCES provides all staff members with access to professional learning opportunities and mental health resources as well as the time to partake in team/group activities to share ideas in a supportive, encouraging environment.

Some of the ongoing avenues available to our employees include but are not limited to:

- SWBOCES participates in a 24/7 Employee Assistance Program (EAP). This provides confidential and experienced assistance to help an employee and their family resolve personal problems that affect their health, family, or job. In addition to assessment and referral services, the EAP provides information, education, and consultation both independently and in concert with other professional resources. EAP is designed specifically for educators. It offers a number of solutions for personal problems and a targeted menu of benefits and resources addressing the unique professional issues in an educational community. EAP starts with all the traditional counseling services designed to address significant life problems, and they add Work/Life benefits to address the everyday problems involved in juggling work and family. The goal of the EAP is to help all employees achieve their peak performance through training, coaching and wellness. They can be reached by phone at 1-800-666-5327, online at <https://www.theeap.com/educators-eap> or via the EAP page on the [SWBOCES website](#). In addition, monthly newsletters are shared via email with all staff members.
- To offer support and guidance specifically to new teachers, counselors, social workers, therapists and administrators, SWBOCES has a Mentoring Program. Mentoring provides personalized and intensive support to new employees in the professions mentioned. To assist in transition, SWBOCES acknowledges the importance of helping personnel, new to their professions, by offering an environment that facilitates growth and development through guidance and support. A catalog of events is available in MyLearningPlan.
- The Human Resources Department schedules monthly virtual drop-in sessions and topics may include COVID related items as appropriate. Human Resource staff will be available via these virtual sessions to answer staff questions and share resources.
- SWBOCES has informed all staff to send any questions related to the COVID-19 district response to their supervisor who will forward them to the Director of Communications, who in turn shares those questions with the District Response Team for review. Answers are shared either via email with all staff or with the leadership team.

Social Emotional Well Being of Students

SWBOCES offers a variety of student programs, many of which have a therapeutic approach embedded in them. Additionally, all student programs, including Special Services and Career Services students, incorporate *Therapeutic Crisis Intervention for Schools* (TCIS)-researched strategies into the classroom environment. Implementing a Connected Learning Environment in all classrooms is a district-wide goal, and all staff members have received annual TCIS training. Additionally, SWBOCES has districtwide and building-level Comprehensive School Counseling plans to meet student needs.

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