



# **Southern Westchester BOCES Health and Safety Guide**



*Last updated: March 15, 2024*

## 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

## Table of Contents

Stakeholders	<a href="#">3</a>	COVID Protocols	<a href="#">7</a>
Introduction	<a href="#">4</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Surveillance Testing</li> <li>• Required Reporting of a Positive COVID Test</li> <li>• Protocol for Return to Work/School</li> <li>• Medically Vulnerable High-Risk Staff &amp; Students</li> </ul>	
Health & Safety	<a href="#">5</a>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal Protective Equipment</li> <li>• Hand Hygiene</li> <li>• Additional Space Considerations for Safety</li> </ul>			
Facilities Practices	<a href="#">6</a>	Social Emotional Well Being	<a href="#">9</a>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cleaning Protocols</li> <li>• Ongoing Maintenance</li> <li>• Movement Within Buildings</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Emotional Well-Being of Staff</li> <li>• Social Emotional Well-Being of Students</li> </ul>	

## 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, Ed. D., 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  
Frank Reale, 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  
Jessica Walker, Director of Special Services  
Alexandria Connally, Ed. D., 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

While still posing a significant health threat to those at higher risk, COVID-19 impacts are now increasingly similar to other respiratory viruses, like flu. As a result, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and NYDOH have changed their guidance to a more unified approach that encompasses all respiratory viruses. Although the COVID-19 virus continues to mutate and in some cases lead to death, increased access to COVID-19 information, vaccination, testing, and treatment has greatly mitigated the threat.

### **Ongoing Response to COVID-19 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 (NYSDOH), New York State Education Department (NYSED), the Westchester County Department of Health (WCDOH) and the SWBOCES 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 department contact tracing if required, and follow all other requirements of those departments and the NYSED. The Director of Human Resources will serve as the COVID-19 Resource Primary Contact Person and will assist the Westchester County Department of Health in providing any required information.

The COVID Response Team will continue to serve as a resource and provide leadership throughout any period of outbreak. 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 in this role for their divisions, working closely with the Director of Human Resources, who will remain the primary contact with the WCDOH. 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 the SWBOCES Health and Safety Guide for the 23-24 school year, and assisting 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 and are symptomatic are encouraged to wear a mask upon returning to work or school. 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).

### **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 tested positive and are symptomatic. Individuals may return to school or work when their symptoms are improving overall and they are fever-free without medication for 24 hours.

Staff who test positive should send a blank email to [COVIDalerts@swboces.org](mailto:COVIDalerts@swboces.org) and look for a response directing them how to proceed. This email is monitored during regular work hours.

## 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 requested and as long as supplies are available from New York State or the federal government.

### **Required Reporting of a Positive COVID Test**

**Employees who are COVID-positive must notify SWBOCES** by using the following designated email, [covidalerts@swboces.org](mailto:covidalerts@swboces.org). The employee should send a blank email to the address, and then follow the directions provided in the response email. Administrators will monitor this email during regular school hours, and a response will be sent accordingly.

If a staff member or student has tested positive for COVID-19 they are cleared to return to work once they meet the NYDOH guidelines for ending isolation. This information can be found by using this [link](#):

### **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 are asymptomatic may remain at school or work. If symptoms develop, positive individuals should then follow the [guidance](#) for being symptomatic and positive.
- A NYS COVID benefit for staff is available in limited circumstances and can only be applied in a qualifying situation and require the confirmation of a positive COVID test result. The NYS COVID benefit is only available for employees with a positive COVID test result. Employee sick days should be utilized for all other non-qualifying issues.

### **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.

~~~