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MEMORANDUM

To: Superintendents, Charter School Leaders, Assistant Superintendents,
Leaders of Special Education Schools, Collaborative Leaders, and Leaders of
Private Schools
From: Jeffrey C. Riley, Commissioner
Date: June 4, 2020
Subject: Initial Summer School Re-Opening Guidance

With the Governor's announcement that child care programs, summer day camps, and municipal recreation programs can re-open as part of the state's Phase II economic restart plan, we want to provide introductory guidance for summer programming, even though these programs do not typically begin until early July.

As we begin preparations for the summer, it is important to provide context for the guidance we are releasing beginning this week. Please note that this guidance is for *summer programming only* and will be revisited as more public health data becomes known. We are issuing this short initial guidance document to help districts and schools begin summer planning efforts. We will release detailed guidance focused on special education summer programs no later than Tuesday, June 9 and comprehensive general guidance about summer programs within the next two weeks.

The content of this initial document is focused primarily on the health and safety of our students, staff, and educational community. It is not focused on academic programs, teaching and learning, and student support models that are also integral parts of summer planning efforts; those topics will be included in the comprehensive guidance to come.

Today's guidance is in three sections: an overview of current health and safety guidelines, initial guidance on summer school programs, and initial health and safety standards for in-person summer learning.

Overview of Current Health and Safety Guidelines

We are operating on the best information we have as of early June about how to maintain the health and safety of our students and staff in any in-person school programs and limit the risk of COVID-19 transmission. Based on federal and state guidance and recommendations available at this time, safely re-opening schools for summer programming will require that the following parameters are in place:

Staying home if sick: As part of the social compact of re-opening, students and staff must stay home if they are feeling sick or have any symptom associated with COVID-19. This means that schools will need to have enhanced protocols in place for managing staff and student absences.

Face coverings and masks: Students and staff must wear face coverings or masks, with exceptions only for those students or staff for whom it is not safe to do so due to age, medical conditions, or other considerations. In cases in which face coverings or masks are not possible, strict social distancing of 6 feet is required. Parents will be responsible for providing students with face coverings or masks. Schools must have backup disposable masks available for students who need them. Staff may choose to wear their own mask or one provided by the school.

Frequent hand washing and hand sanitizing: All students and staff must engage in frequent handwashing, including upon arrival, before and after meals, after bathroom use, after coughing or sneezing, and before dismissal. Protocols must be established for effective handwashing in which individuals use soap and water to wash all surfaces of their hands for at least 20 seconds, wait for visible lather, rinse thoroughly, and dry with an individual disposable towel. If handwashing is not available, hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol content can be used.

Maintaining 6 feet of separation at all times. All students and staff must maintain a social distance of 6 feet to the greatest extent possible. Desks must be spaced at least 6 feet apart and facing the same direction, and protocols must be developed to maintain this distance when students are entering and exiting the building and moving through the school (including to and within restrooms) when feasible.

Isolation and discharge protocols for students who may become ill during the day: Schools must develop protocols for isolation and discharge of students who become sick during the school day. A specific room must be maintained for students with COVID-19 symptoms that is separate from the nurse's office or other space where other ailments are treated.

Smaller, isolated groups of students assigned to one teacher: Successfully implementing 6 feet of social distancing will require significantly smaller class sizes and reduced staff-to-student ratios. Furthermore, where feasible, programs should isolate individual groups of students with one consistently assigned teacher, and groups should not mix with other students or staff. At this time, group sizes are restricted to a maximum of 10 students, with a maximum of 12 individuals, including students and staff, in each room.

Regular cleaning, sanitizing, disinfecting, and disposal protocols: Schools will need to undertake new protocols and routines to ensure that facilities and surfaces are regularly cleaned, sanitized, and disinfected in accordance with health and safety guidelines and that hazardous materials are disposed of properly.

Entry screening and other facility operations: While additional information about symptom screening and other facility operations will be provided in the coming weeks, after discussions

with the COVID-19 Command Center’s Medical Advisory Committee, it is not recommended to temperature check students at entry due to the significant number of both false positive and false negative results.

Initial Guidance on Summer School Programs

The purpose of the initial guidance we are releasing today is to support districts and schools in their summer school planning efforts.

Drawing on the current public health and safety guidelines above, the checklist below outlines many of the **most significant parameters and adjustments** that districts and schools will need to make to safely open in-person summer programs. **The information below is based on the best information we have at this time, is for planning purposes only, and is not exhaustive.** We will release more comprehensive guidance in the coming weeks. Any summer programs that open will be required to adhere to the final health and safety guidelines that will be issued by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) in collaboration with the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS), the Department of Public Health (DPH), DESE’s Return to School Working Group of stakeholders from across the education sector, and relevant experts. Districts and schools that hold in-person summer programs will be asked to attest that they have summer school safety plans that meet these guidelines.

As district and school teams begin initial summer planning conversations, we encourage you to consider the following recommendations:

1. **It is possible that remote learning will continue to be the most feasible and safest option for many districts and schools.** The initial checklist below will help you begin to assess if in-person summer learning will be feasible and safe for your students and staff or if you should plan for a remote learning summer program.
2. **The following student groups should be prioritized for instructional programs that will maximize student learning, including in-person instruction where possible:**
 - a. **Students with disabilities**, particularly those who receive summer services as a provision of their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)
 - b. **Students who have been off track or only intermittently engaged** prior to and/or during the period of school closures
 - c. **Vulnerable students** who may be at risk socially or emotionally due to the school closures
3. **If feasible, conducting even a small in-person program may support districts and schools in readiness efforts for a fall re-opening**, even as guidance for the fall will necessarily diverge from the summer guidance due to the trajectory of the virus and the number of staff and students involved.

Special education: We plan to release more substantive guidance on special education summer programming no later than Tuesday, June 9. We recognize that summer services are particularly needed for students with disabilities whose IEPs include services during the summer, either as Extended School Year services, summer programs, or as year-round services for some students attending education collaboratives or approved special education schools. Districts and schools are encouraged to provide in-person services to as many students as is feasible. We hope that the additional guidance to come will help districts increase access to in-person summer services for students with disabilities.

A few final reminders as you begin thinking about summer planning:

- We urge you think about this work in stages:
 1. **Plan:** Review and outline the requirements that your program will need to meet to open safely and effectively.
 2. **Prepare:** Gather resources and supplies, create protocols, form teams, and assign responsibilities to staff members.
 3. **Implement:** Set up your program, monitor, and refine it.
 4. **Communicate:** Throughout the process of opening and during the summer, make sure you are communicating regularly with all stakeholders, including staff, students, families, community organizations, and your local board of health.
- Our comprehensive summer guidance will provide more detailed health and safety requirements as well as **more information about the academic components of recommended summer programming**, including teaching and learning and student selection. We also plan to provide you with **checklists and templates** to support you in this work.

Initial Health and Safety Standards for In-Person Summer Learning:

Preparation and program planning:

- Opening:** Aim to open in-person summer programs beginning the week of July 6. Districts and schools may choose to open these programs sooner, but not before DESE's final summer school guidance is released.
- Capacity:** Keep summer programming enrollment at less than 25 percent of a school's capacity, with no more than 300 students at a time in one building.
- Instruction:** Provide instruction for 3-4 hours a day. Gym, recess, and electives should only be provided if these offerings can be held outside and following 6 feet of social distancing. Additional instruction can also be provided remotely.
- Permissions:** Ensure summer school permission forms include relevant medical information and comprehensive contact information to easily reach families in case of concerns. Review medical information submitted by parents and reach out to parents of high-risk children to encourage them to discuss with their healthcare provider whether the program is a safe option for the child, if additional protections are necessary, and what

supports can be offered to best help their child understand and adhere to the health and safety requirements.

- ❑ **COVID-19 point person:** Designate a senior staff person responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns. Other staff should know who this person is and how to contact this individual.
- ❑ **Protocol development:** Districts and schools will need to develop protocols in advance of re-opening on topics including: hygiene and cleaning; identifying, isolating and discharging sick students; ensuring safe vendor deliveries; providing safe transportation if transportation is necessary; managing program closures and staff and student absences; administering medication to students, including any safety concerns; coordinating space and facilitating services to students, including IEP services; and sharing information and guidelines with families, including providing translation and interpretation services for limited English proficient parents.
- ❑ **Limitations:** Field trips, visitors, and assemblies are not permitted.
- ❑ **Staff training:** Provide and reinforce COVID-19-focused education and training for all staff, including mitigation procedures, personal hygiene, signs and symptoms of illness, assessment, the referral process for students requiring mental health supports, and the use and disposal of health and safety supplies. Focused training for staff who must maintain close contact with students, such as for special education teachers, should also be provided. All training must be provided before summer programs begin; more details will be provided in final guidance.

Transportation and entry/exit:

- ❑ **Transportation:** Establish a transportation plan for general and special education. Programs that cannot avoid providing transportation must develop a plan for following health and safety protocols. Programs providing transportation must maximize space between riders and follow requirements for wearing masks or face coverings. Windows must be kept open when possible. In some cases, students may require cooled spaces during transport for medical reasons. Buses must be cleaned and disinfected daily.
- ❑ **Entry/exit:** Establish clear policies for student entry and dismissal from the building including a plan for traffic, drop-off, and pick-up that complies with social distancing guidelines.

Classroom set up and movement within the building:

- ❑ **Class size:** Have no more than 10 students and 12 people total in a classroom (i.e., 1-2 teachers/staff with 10 students).
- ❑ **Class isolation:** Keep students in self-contained classes with the same teacher and students throughout each day during the summer program, when feasible.
- ❑ **Desk spacing:** Ensure that student desks are spaced at least 6 feet apart and are facing forward.
- ❑ **Classroom placement:** Use additional space in school buildings to spread out classrooms. Classes should be held outside to the extent possible and if feasible.
- ❑ **Movement within building:** Develop a plan for safely moving students in and out their classrooms while maintaining 6 feet of social distance when feasible; necessary student

access to common areas, including bathrooms, must be managed by staff to avoid crowding.

- Food service/meals:** Hold breakfast and/or lunch in classrooms, following appropriate food safety guidelines and taking specific precautions for food allergies.

Supporting vulnerable students and students with disabilities

- Supports and staffing:** Students with disabilities will require unique supports in programs that may make it less possible to practice social distancing and may require ample staff support to carry out the necessary hygiene practices. Programs must ensure that the program is adequately staffed, staff are prepared and properly trained to accommodate children's needs, and families are consulted as partners to ensure the health and safety of students. More guidance is forthcoming.

General health and safety practices

- Entry screening:** More information will be provided in the final guidance.
- Face coverings and masks:** Ensure all students and staff wear face coverings or masks, unless not possible for medical or behavioral reasons. In cases in which face coverings or masks are not possible, strict social distancing of 6 feet is required.
- Handwashing:** Establish a regular hand washing routine upon entry; before and after meals; after sneezing, coughing, or nose blowing; after using any shared equipment such as computer keyboards; and before dismissal. Hand washing should use soap and water or hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol content.
- Separate room for suspected COVID-19 cases.** Set up a separate area (different from the nurse's office) where students suspected of having COVID-19 can go until they are picked up by a parent.
- Facility cleaning:** Establish systems for frequent cleaning, disinfecting, and sanitizing all utilized materials and spaces, especially bathrooms and frequently touched surfaces.
- Supplies:** Ensure that all necessary health and safety supplies are on hand (DESE will issue guidance on COVID-19 related supplies in the coming week).
- Staff/students with medical conditions.** Be mindful of staff and students with underlying medical conditions and plan accordingly.

Families should be asked to:

- Do a wellness check on their child each morning at home before determining if the child should go to summer school.
- Keep their child home if they suspect their child is ill.
- Ensure their child arrives to school wearing a face covering and ideally has an extra on hand.
- Follow school policies on drop off and pick up and recognize that parent access to the building will be strictly limited.
- Be sure the school has updated contact information in the event the child needs to be sent home.