



TULARE COUNTY HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY

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Over the last several weeks, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) has updated and released various guidance documents for K-12 schools. Tulare County is committed to the safety of students, families, and staff and are working in coordination with our educational partners to help clarify how the guidance impacts our County.

On August 3, 2020, CDPH issued guidance on waivers for TK-6th grade. Tulare County further defined the [waiver requirements](#) and developed a [waiver application](#) in which interested schools could apply to resume in-person instruction when it's safe to do so based on epidemiological data. The August 3, 2020 guidance noted that additional guidance was forthcoming to identify conditions in which schools otherwise prohibited from reopening for full in-person instruction can offer in-person services to small groups of students.

On August 25, 2020, CDPH issued Guidance Related to Cohorts ([Cohorting Guidance](#)), which sets minimum health and safety guidelines across multiple sectors serving youth, including childcare and schools (public and private). The purpose of the guidance is to establish minimum parameters for providing specialized services, targeted services and support for students while schools are otherwise closed for in-person instruction in ways that maintain the focus on health and safety to minimize transmission. When determining which students should be offered participation in a cohort, priority should be given to students requiring special education, children with disabilities, English learners, Foster/Homeless students, or those with limited access to internet or devices. Learn more by reviewing the [Providing Targeted, Specialized Support and Services at School FAQ Document](#).

Tulare County is viewing the cohort guidance as a bridge between now and when schools can safely resume in-person learning for a broader group of students after their waiver is approved. Schools electing to institute cohorts must adhere to the guidelines and are strongly encouraged to pay close attention to the following factors:

Cohort guidance allows for up to 14 students and 2 supervising adults. To better accommodate special services, we have interpreted this to be a total of 16 individuals which could be any combination of students and supervising adults. The guidance of 16 individuals per cohort should be viewed as a maximum number of participants; when feasible, smaller groups are preferred to reduce the risk of COVID exposure and transmission. Classrooms must be able to accommodate all students and adults with more than sufficient social distancing of at least 6 feet between each person.

Schools can only offer cohorts up to 100 students or 25% of their student enrollment (whichever is greater). The intent of the cohorts is to limit group size and provide targeted, specialized support and services.

Distance learning should remain an option for all students. If a family is given the option to join a cohort and chooses not to, they should not be penalized.

The cohort must operate so that supervising adults and students do not interact/mix with other cohorts. This practice decreases the potential for exposure or transmission and facilitates a more efficient contact tracing process in the event of a positive case. Updated guidance released on September 4th does indicate that supervising adults should be assigned to one cohort and must work solely with that cohort, unless serving children five years of age and younger in which case an adult may be assigned to no more than 2 cohorts. However, schools should avoid changing staff assignments to the extent practicable. Also, substitute providers who are covering for short-term staff absences are allowed but must only work with one cohort of children per day.

The Tulare County Public Health Department strongly encourages educational partners to establish a surveillance plan by arranging for ongoing testing with a local health care facility. A list of facilities offering COVID19 testing can be found [here](#). In addition, development of a safety plan and participation in the Tulare County Public Health Contact Tracing webinars are highly recommended.

The health and safety of our community is our number one priority. Tulare County strives to work collaboratively with our educational partners to ensure that our community is safe and that all parameters are in place to further reduce the spread of COVID19. The Tulare County Public Health Department provide support and assistance in the event of an outbreak and will work closely with our educational partners to investigate any complaints of non-compliance or unsafe conditions. General questions regarding school waivers and cohort guidance including assistance with safety plans can be emailed to TCCovidSchools@tularehhsa.org.