

Buffalo ISD Safe Return to School Plan



The Safe Return to School Plan has been specifically developed for the Buffalo Independent School District for the 2022-2023 School year. The Safe Return to School Plan provides guidelines to inform staff, students, and families of the safest possible methods to ensure the health and safety of all while continuing to remain in compliance with all governmental mandates.

These guidelines are included as part of the District Emergency Operations Plan's (EOP) Infectious/Communicable Disease Annex and are approved by the District Superintendent and Office of Emergency Management.

The Infectious/Communicable Disease Annex and its guidelines apply to all Buffalo ISD campuses and support facilities. While the general concepts and considerations remain constant for all district campuses, each campus will assign critical tasks and responsibilities differently based on their respective structure and governance.

The Infectious/Communicable Disease Annex provides a general framework for prevention, preparedness planning, response, and recovery for a large-scale outbreak of an infectious/communicable disease. It outlines the roles and responsibilities of School District personnel and units and the support that public partners can be expected to provide to the School District.

The protocols outlined below, utilize the Annex's framework and serve as a guide in the specific response to the current COVID-19 pandemic within the Buffalo ISD community. Depending on the virus and the spread of the virus, some or all of these steps may be expanded, modified, or eliminated. The district superintendent, or his delegated representative, will work directly with state and local health authorities, the Texas Education Agency (TEA), and the Texas Department of Health & Human Services (TDHHS), authorities to implement appropriate actions based on the public health hazard.

This appendix is provided in this abbreviated form to be released to the public in order to inform families and stakeholders while maintaining the integrity and privacy of the District Emergency Operations Plan, which is a protected document under the Government Code. These guidelines are also adapted to be specific to the current COVID-19 pandemic and may change in accordance with ongoing public health state orders and guidance.

The following guidelines serve to comprehensively meet the Texas Governor's Executive Orders GA38, (under Section 418.012 of the Texas Government Code), TEA guidelines, University Inter-Scholastic League (UIL), and all federal, state, and local public health department orders as best possible, while still providing in-person learning and participation in student programs.

Self-Prescreening: The best way to prevent the spread of illness in our schools is to stay home when ill. Students should not attend school if they have a **fever of 100.0 F** or higher or new onset of any of the following symptoms of illness that may include:

- Loss of taste or smell
- Cough
- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Headache
- Chills
- Sore Throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Exaggerated shivering
- Significant muscle pain or ache
- Diarrhea
- Nausea or Vomiting

Washing and sanitizing hands often, especially before eating, after using the restroom, after blowing your nose, after coughing or sneezing, and after coming into contact with highly touched objects such as doorknobs, handrails, etc. can help reduce the spread of illness.

Facial Coverings

- Facial Coverings will be optional for all staff and students (grades PK-12) to wear at their personal discretion and preference.
- Buffalo ISD will continue to make available protective equipment (PPE) including hand sanitizer for all employees and students.
- Each BISD Campus will have facial coverings and other PPE items available for any employee or student upon request.

Immunizations and medications

- All students enrolled in Buffalo ISD must be in compliance with state-required immunizations.
- COVID-19 vaccines are not required for staff or students. According to the CDC, COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective and recommended for all eligible individuals.

Individuals who test positive for COVID-19: Buffalo ISD is required to report positive cases to the respective County Public Health Office and the Texas Department of State Health Services per TEA

Providing Healthy Environments • Cleaning and Disinfection. Maintenance and Operations custodial teams will maintain a regular cleaning schedule to disinfect high traffic and commonly used spaces throughout the instructional day, restrooms, large group transition areas, and cafeteria between meals. Hand sanitizer stations will be located in multiple areas throughout the campus.

Transportation

During the 2022-23 school year, the Buffalo ISD Transportation Department will continue implementing enhanced cleaning and disinfecting procedures. Bus transportation is provided for eligible riders and whenever possible, efforts will be made to allow for social distancing. Buses will be cleaned daily, focusing on high-touch surfaces such as bus seats, steering wheels, knobs, and door handles.

COVID-19 Mitigation Protocols

Alerts & Notifications

Buffalo ISD has a standard response in place in the event of a confirmed COVID-19 among students and staff at a specific campus. In the event your student's specific classroom or student program is impacted, parents and staff of those specific classes or programs will receive a general notification from campus administration no later than 5 p.m. on the day the COVID-19 case is reported.

Isolation Protocols

If isolation/quarantine is recommended for infected/exposed/ close contact persons, in most cases voluntary isolation is encouraged based on guidance and directed education from the local health department, TDSHS and CDC.

If Someone Gets Sick

- Students and staff with a lab-confirmed positive case should notify their campus administration as soon as possible. Notification should include:
 - The test date, district facilities visited within the last 2 days, and any known individuals living at home in close contact
 - This information, including the name of the staff or student, will be kept confidential.
 - Buffalo ISD is required to report all reports of positive COVID-19 tests to the TDSHS Texas Department of State Health Services.
- Staff and Students with a lab-confirmed positive should not return until they have met the guidelines established in this document to return or otherwise been advised by a medical professional
- Individuals identified as having close contact will be individually notified of potential exposure by the respective campus administration.
- Maintenance and Operations will ensure all exposed areas are thoroughly cleaned and disinfected.
- The District Director of Health Services will coordinate with the County Health Department as required.

Guidelines for students returning to school:

- If student tested positive for COVID-19 – With or Without Symptoms:
 - Recommend parent/guardian to consult with their primary care physician for guidance of care and testing
 - Notify the Buffalo ISD district registered nurse **Andrena Glick at Buffalo Elementary**
 - Scenarios for the return of a COVID-19 positive student:
 - ✦ Student that has tested positive, with symptoms, may return to campus
 - ✦ After symptoms have improved **AND**
 - ✦ At least 5 days have passed since symptoms first appeared **AND**
 - ✦ At least 24 hours have passed since recovery (resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medication)
 - ✦ Student that has tested positive, with no symptoms, may return to campus
 - ✦ After 5 days from the test date
 - ✦ Student that has tested positive with no symptoms but then develop symptoms after the test date, but before the 5- day period has ended, may return to campus
 - ✦ After symptoms have improved **AND**
 - ✦ At least 5 days have passed since symptoms first appeared **AND**
 - ✦ At least 24 hours have passed since recovery (resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications)

NOTE: *Date of symptom onset (symptomatic) or positive test (asymptomatic) is day zero for*

quarantine timeline determination.

- ✦ If the individual has tested positive for COVID-19 and believes that the test was a false positive, and wants to return to school before completing the above stay at home period, the individual must either:
 - ✦ Obtain a medical professional's note clearing the individual for return based on an alternative diagnosis, Buffalo ISD recognizes the privacy of medical information therefore, the note does not need to indicate what the alternative diagnosis is, **OR**
 - ✦ Obtain two laboratory-confirmed, PCR acute infection tests (at a physician's office, approved testing location, or other site) at least 24 hours apart that comes back negative for COVID-19
 - ✦ Student must report to the campus nurse for school re-entry
- Student develops one or more symptoms (See the list of COVID-19 symptoms listed on page 2 of this plan) that could be COVID-19 and who is not evaluated by a medical professional or tested for COVID-19, such individual is assumed to have COVID-19. It is recommended that the parent/guardian consult with their primary care physician for the guidance of care and testing. The student may **NOT** return to the campus until the individual has completed the criteria listed below:
 - Symptoms have improved, **AND**

- At least 5 days have passed since symptoms first appeared **AND**
- At least 24 hours have passed since recovery (resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications), **OR**

If a student has symptoms that could be COVID-19 and wants to return to school before completing the above stay-at-home period of at least 5 days, then the student must either:

- ✦ Obtain a medical professional's note clearing the individual for return based on an alternative diagnosis. Buffalo ISD recognizes the privacy of medical information therefore, the note does not need to indicate what the alternative diagnosis is, **OR**
- ✦ Submit a negative result from a laboratory-confirmed, acute infection test (PCR or antigen test) to the campus nurse
- Students **must** report to the campus nurse for re-entry to campus.

Guidelines for Staff returning to work:

- If employee tested positive for COVID-19 – With or Without Symptoms

- Recommend contacting their primary care physician for care and testing.
- Notify your supervisor of your absences due to testing positive for COVID-19.

*Up to 7 days of COVID-19 Paid Leave may be provided to employees who test positive for COVID-19. Employees who must be absent because they are positive for COVID-19 should provide documentation of their laboratory-confirmed, positive test result directly to their principal/supervisor. If at a Buffalo ISD facility, depart from the facility, away from other employees as soon as possible.

- Employee that tested positive for COVID-19 **with symptoms** may return to work after symptoms have improved AND
 - At least 5 days have passed since symptoms first appeared AND
 - At least 24 hours have passed since recovery (resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medication)

Employees who are absent beyond 5 workdays may choose to contact the Human Resources Specialist (Lisa Webb) to request FMLA leave. FMLA leave is not required. FMLA provides unpaid, job-protected leave. Serious health conditions that qualify for FMLA leave are conditions that (1) require an overnight stay in a hospital or other medical care facility, and/or (2) incapacitate the employee for more than five consecutive days and require ongoing medical treatment.

- ✦ Employee that has tested positive for COVID-19 **without symptoms**, may return to work
 - After 5 days have passed with no developing symptoms
- ✦ Employee that tested positive with **no symptoms** but then develops symptoms after the test date, but before the 5-day period has ended, may return to work
 - After symptoms have improved **AND**
 - At least 5 days have passed since symptoms first appeared AND

- 24 hours have passed since recovery (resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications).

- ✦ Employees that test positive for COVID-19 and believe the test was a false positive and wants to return to work before completing the above stay at home period, must either:

- Obtain a medical professional's note clearing the individual for their return based on an alternative diagnosis. Buffalo ISD recognizes the privacy of medical information therefore, the note does not need to indicate the alternative diagnosis.

○ OR

- Obtain two laboratory-confirmed, PCR acute infection tests (at a physician's office, approved testing location, or another site) at least 24 hours apart that comes back negative for COVID-19.
- Employee must submit documentation for return to work to their campus/department administrator.

- If an employee develops one or more symptoms (See the list of COVID-19 symptoms listed on page 2 of this plan) that could be COVID-19 and who is not evaluated by a medical professional or tested for COVID-19. It is recommended that the employee contact their primary healthcare provider for care and testing.

The employee should consider NOT returning to work until:

- ✦ Symptoms have improved, **AND**
- ✦ At least 5 days have passed since symptoms first appeared **AND**
- ✦ At least 24 hours have passed since recovery (resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications),

OR

- ✦ Obtain an acute negative infection test (PCR or antigen test).

- Board Policy FFAD-Communicable Disease Control Measure will always be followed
Notify supervisor

- ✦ A doctor's release is required for all personal illness absences that exceed 5 consecutive days or longer. When returning to duty, it should be presented to the principal/supervisor.

Employees who find themselves absent beyond 5 consecutive workdays may choose to contact Buffalo ISD Human Resources to request FMLA leave. FLMA leave is not required. FMLA provides unpaid, job-protected leave. Serious health conditions that qualify for FMLA leave are conditions that (1) require an

overnight stay in a hospital or other medical care facility, and/or (2) incapacitate the employee for more than five consecutive days and require ongoing medical treatment.

- **Employee is in close contact:** If an employee has been notified by their supervisor/department that they have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, the employee should consider:
 - Consider self-isolating for 5 days after the date of the last contact as recommended by the CDC.
 - Notifying their supervisor, if they choose to self-isolate.
 - Consider taking a laboratory-confirmed, PCR or antigen test.
 - *Up to 7 days of COVID-19 Paid Leave may be provided to employees who must be absent because their child (**school age or younger**) is positive for COVID-19. Employees should provide documentation of their child's laboratory-confirmed, positive test result directly to their principal/supervisor.
 - Employee who meets the close contact threshold with a COVID-19 positive individual and are in one of the following groups, do not need to stay at home.
 - Ages 18 or older and have received all recommended vaccine doses, including boosters and additional primary shots for some immunocompromised people.
 - Was confirmed COVID-19 positive within the last 90 days and has fully recovered.

Employees with questions about FMLA medical leave should contact Human Resources Leave Specialists:

Mrs. Lisa Webb
(903)-322-3765
webbla@buffaloisd.net

Students with Disabilities: Students with disabilities will follow the same guidelines and protocols, with specific services and accommodations as needed, to meet their individual needs.

Cleaning/Sanitizing:

- Maintenance and Operations custodial teams will maintain a regular cleaning schedule to disinfect high traffic and commonly used spaces throughout the instructional day, including door handles, restrooms, large group transition areas, and cafeteria between meals. Hand sanitizer stations will be located in multiple areas throughout the campus.

COVID-19 Positive Case Notifications: Buffalo ISD will notify the respective County Public Health Agency and the Texas Education Agency of any test-confirmed COVID-19 positive as required.

District Communications during COVID-19 Pandemic:

In coordination with the local health departments, Buffalo ISD shall coordinate and disseminate all communications related to the specific infectious disease.

- General communications from the school district will include – information about the disease in general

- information about the disease impact within the school district
- actions of the school district
- what the school district should/should not do
- Targeted communications to affected or vulnerable populations within the school district, as needed
- Specific information regarding the prevention of the spread of the disease

Buffalo ISD posts this document and all COVID-19 response information on its main webpage as a reference for guidance and provide answers to many questions.

Buffalo ISD employees should direct any COVID-19 inquiries to their immediate supervisor.