

Educational Service Unit 7

SAFE RETURN TO SERVICES/INSTRUCTION PLAN



Serving the Schools of Boone, Butler, Colfax, Merrick, Nance, Platte, and Polk Counties.

ESU 7
2657 44th Ave.
Columbus, NE 68601
www.esu7.org

Last Review: August 9, 2022

Discussion and public input - Monday, August 15 @ 5:30 p.m. during regular Board meeting.

Discussion and public input - Monday, February 20 @ 5:30 p.m. during regular Board meeting.

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Introduction

General Information (Pursuant to the Federal American Rescue Plan)

On March 11, 2021, President Biden signed the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act of 2021, Public Law. The ARP Act includes nearly \$122 billion for the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER III) Fund that allows state and local education agencies (LEAs) to take additional steps for continued safe in-person instruction and to address unfinished teaching and learning to mitigate the COVID-19 pandemic. The ARP Act requires each school district that receives ARP ESSER funds to develop and make publicly available on the school district's website, no later than 30 days after receiving ARP ESSER funds, a plan for the safe return to in-person instruction, and continuity of services for all schools (Safe Return Plan). The ARP Act further requires that the district seek public comment on the Safe Return Plan and take those comments into account in finalization of the Safe Return Plan. A school district must periodically, but no less frequently than every six months through September 30, 2023, review and, as appropriate, revise its Safe Return Plan. ***At this time ESU's do not qualify for aid via ARP.***

The ESU 7 COVID-19 Return to Services/School Plan initially developed during the summer of 2020 allowed us to remain open and successfully serve our school districts in the safest modality possible given the public health conditions during the 2020-2021 academic year. This document is an update to the plan for the 2021-22 school year to ensure the continuation of services for the 2021-22 and beyond. The updates are considering the new guidance from the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the Nebraska Association of Local Health Departments (NALHD), the East Central District Health Department (ECDHD), Four Corners Health Department (FCHD), Central District Health Department (CDHD), the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE), and the United States Department of Education (USDE). Although ESUs do not qualify for financial support by the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act, our school districts must. The contents of this document, the format, components, and name have been revised to meet these same requirements, so we are able to provide comparable services and supports under the same mitigating circumstances as our member school districts.

The ESU 7 safe Return to Services/Instruction Plan will be reviewed at least every 6 months and may be adjusted as new information/guidance becomes available.

Plan Development Team

Larianne Polk, ESU 7 Chief Administrator

Tami Clay, ESU 7 Special Education Director

Marci Ostmeyer, ESU 7 Professional Development Director

Dan Ellsworth, ESU 7 Technology Director and parent of children in ESU 7 region

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Tricia Spieker, Speech-Language Pathology Coordinator

Jackie Ternus, School Psychology Coordinator and parent of children in ESU 7 region

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Judy Zadina, Vision Program Coordinator

Cynthia Alarcon, Migrant Education Program Coordinator and parent of children in ESU 7 region

Larry Shefcyk, ESU 7 Maintenance

Linda Shefcyk, ESU 7 Human Resources and Business Manager

Troy Loefelholz, ESU 7 Superintendent Executive Committee Chair

Guiding Principles

Mission: The mission of ESU 7 is to provide leadership and support by delivering customized and innovative services.

Planning Purpose: The purpose of this Safe Return to Services/Instruction Plan is to keep our students, staff, and families safe and in-school should the pandemic situation reoccur. The plan was developed to allow for changes and updates throughout a pandemic, based upon COVID incidences within our community and consideration of guidance from local, state, and federal governments and health officials.

Schools vs. ESU: The term “school” is used throughout the ARC guidelines. For the ESU’s purposes, this term has been revised to read “schools/ESU” where appropriate.

COVID Transmission Levels

The plan was developed considering the COVID transmission levels and positivity rates within our ESU 7 region.

If COVID transmission levels/positivity rates increase, this plan may be revised to include additional COVID mitigation measures.

Layered Prevention

The CDC recommends that all schools/ESU implement and layer prevention strategies, including:

- Universal, correct use of masks
- Physical distancing
- Handwashing and respiratory etiquette
- Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, and
- Contact Tracing (in combination with isolation and quarantine)

All prevention strategies provide some level of protection, and layered strategies implemented at the same time provide the greatest level of protection. (CDC)

Components

Universal and Correct Wearing of Masks

Mitigating Measures/Safety Protocols:

1. Face masks are optional for all staff and students on campus.
2. Correct wearing of masks as described by the CDC.
3. Face masks may be required for staff, students, and visitors if COVID cases rise and it is believed that this safety precaution is necessary to prevent further spread and a possible school closure.

Modifying Facilities to Allow for Physical Distancing

Mitigating Measures/Safety Protocols:

1. Social distancing measures (goal of maintaining 3 feet between students where feasible) may be taken to prevent the spread of COVID as needed.
2. Non-essential furniture may be removed from classrooms to maximize social distancing between students if needed. Desks will all face the same direction **if** additional preventative measures are needed.
3. Non-essential visitors and volunteers may be limited if case levels increase.
4. Six feet of social distancing may be encouraged for all students **if** COVID cases rise and it is necessary to prevent the further spread and possible school closure.

Handwashing and Respiratory Etiquette

Mitigating Measures/Safety Protocols:

1. Proper handwashing, cough and sneeze etiquette will be taught, reinforced and monitored.
2. If handwashing is not feasible, hand sanitizer will be provided and used.

Cleaning and Maintaining Healthy Facilities and Improving Ventilation

Mitigating Measures/Safety Protocols:

1. High-touch surfaces will be cleaned routinely (at least daily and between uses when possible).
2. Shared supplies and equipment will be sanitized between uses **if** COVID cases and it is necessary to prevent the further spread and possible school closure.
3. Heating, ventilation and air condition settings will maximize ventilation and bring in as much outdoor air as possible.
4. Air filters will be changed regularly.
5. Windows will be opened if feasible.

Contact Tracing

Mitigating Measures/Safety Protocols:

1. If contact tracing, isolation and quarantines are reinstated, ESU 7 will cooperate and coordinate with the East Central District Health Department Four Corners Health Department, and/or Central District Health Department.
2. ESU 7's normal health procedures will be followed, including:
 - a. Students and staff who are sick must stay home.
 - b. Students and staff must be fever free for 24 hours (without medication) before returning.

Diagnostic and Screening Testing

Mitigating Measures/Safety Protocols:

1. Students and staff who exhibit COVID-related symptoms will be encouraged to stay home and consult your physician.
2. If COVID levels rise, ESU 7 will consult with local officials to determine if screening should be considered for students, staff, and visitors.

Vaccination Efforts

Mitigating Measures/Safety Protocols:

1. ESU 7 provided the opportunity for vaccinations for all staff.
2. ESU 7 will provide information to staff regarding when/how they should receive vaccinations if needed or as requested.
3. ESU 7 will continue to monitor information regarding vaccinations and provide updates to staff when necessary.
4. Vaccination information will be included on the ESU's webpage **if** the need arises.

Appropriate Accommodations for Children with Disabilities

Mitigating Measures/Safety Protocols:

1. Student's IEP's and 504 plans will be followed. Accommodations may be included that apply to the health and safety of students, relative to COVID.

Coordination with State and Local Health Officials

Mitigating Measures/Safety Protocols:

1. ESU 7 will continue to collaborate with our local and state health department on a regular basis, monitoring case levels and new guidance.
2. Information about levels of community transmission will be combined with information about cases within the district; implementation of prevention strategies will be increased if needed.
3. ESU 7 will implement or revise strategies when necessary.
4. This plan will be revised at least once every 6 months.

Continuity of Services

Mitigating Measures/Safety Protocols:

1. It is our goal to continue to provide in-person services and instruction to our school districts and students, addressing their academic, social, emotional, and mental health. We intend to follow the ESU 7 2021-22 calendar delivering services as typical according to the needs of the school districts.
2. If COVID cases rise significantly and we are required to close, every effort will be made to provide these services virtually. All special education services will be provided according to student's IEP's.
3. If COVID cases rise significantly and the ESU is providing virtual services/instruction, the ESU will work with each school district to ensure staff and students have access to the necessary equipment.

Symptoms Screening

Mitigating Measures/Safety Protocols:

1. Staff is encouraged to self-screen at home and to follow health department guidance regarding testing, isolation, and quarantine.
2. Parents and guardians are encouraged to screen students for COVID-related symptoms at home, and to follow health department guidance regarding testing, isolation, and quarantine.
3. If necessary to prevent the further spread and possible school closure, on-site symptom checks **may be** reinstated for everyone entering our facilities.

Other

Mitigating Measures/Safety Protocols:

1. Water fountains will be available. However, students and staff are encouraged to bring water bottles to school/ESU.
2. Self-service food options **may be** limited.

Itinerant/Traveling Staff

Itinerant/Traveling Staff Protocols:

1. ESU 7 staff are expected to follow the protocol described in this document when delivering services outside the ESU 7 campus.
2. In circumstances where the external location has more restrictive protocols in place, ESU 7 staff are expected to follow the more restrictive protocols.

Summary

ESU 7 is committed to providing staff and students with a safe, in-person learning environment. The strategies outlined in this plan will be implemented to mitigate the risk of COVID spread in our school/ESU 7 region. The strategies will be reviewed and revised at least every six months based on COVID cases within the ESU 7 area, and any new research/evidence that becomes available.

Safe Return Plan Documentation Records

Planning, Review and Consideration of Public Comment

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|----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| July 26, 2021: | Draft sent to Plan Development Team for review. |
| Aug 12, 2021: | Director meeting to discuss, review, and revise the plan |
| Aug 13, 2021: | Draft shared with all staff and ESU 7 Board for review and comment. |
| Aug 13, 2021: | Feedback from staff reviewed; suggestions considered |
| Aug 16, 2021: | Final Draft reviewed and discussed at Board meeting; Public Comment open for feedback. Return to |

Services/Instruction adopted by ESU 7 Board with relevant revisions.

Aug 17, 2021: Final Return to Services/Instruction Plan shared with staff and included on ESU 7 website.

Feb 7, 2022: 6 month review of Plan by Development Team.

Feb 21, 2022: Return to Services/Instruction Plan reviewed by ESU 7 with Public Comment.

Feb 22, 2022: Updated Return to Services/Instruction Plan shared with staff and updated on ESU 7 website.

Aug 9, 2022: 6 month review of Plan by ESU 7.

Aug 15, 2022: Updated Return to Services/Instruction Plan reviewed by ESU 7 Board with Public Comment.

Aug 16, 2022: Updated Return to Services/Instruction Plan shared with staff and Updated on the ESU 7 website.

Feb 20, 2023: Updated Return to Services/Instruction Plan reviewed by ESU 7 Board with Public Comment.

Record of General Comments Received about the Plan

DATE COMMENT RECEIVED:	LOCATION OR METHOD COMMENT WAS RECEIVED:	GENERAL TOPIC OF COMMENT:

Record of Changes made to Original Plan

DATE PLAN WAS CHANGED:	SECTION OF CHANGE:	DETAILS OF CHANGES MADE: