

October 13, 2020

### **Guidance Amendment #5: 2020-2021 School Year Planning: A Guide to Address the Challenges of COVID-19**

On September 29, 2020, San Joaquin County moved from the Widespread (purple) tier to the Substantial (red) tier under California's [Blueprint for a Safer Economy](#). While the new designation allowed the resumption of indoor operations for certain businesses in San Joaquin County, it did not permit the resumption of in-person instruction for schools unless the county remained in the red tier for two additional weeks.

On October 13, 2020, state health officials announced that San Joaquin County had reached the two-week benchmark, allowing public, charter, and private schools to resume in-person instruction beyond the limited options available for schools in the purple tier.

The San Joaquin County Office of Education (SJCOE) is issuing this October 13, 2020, Guidance Amendment #5 to the 2020-2021 School Year Planning: A Guide to Address the Challenges of COVID-19 to reflect these changes and provide clarification and guidance for schools in San Joaquin County. Guidance Amendment #5 was approved by the San Joaquin County Public Health Officer.

Schools in San Joaquin County began the 2020-2021 school year providing distance learning to all students, following California mandates to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Some in-person instruction and support services have been available for small cohorts of high priority students, including those with special needs. Additionally, some schools have been able to begin providing on-campus instruction to elementary school students through a waiver process. The recent establishment in the red tier allows schools to open campuses to students of all grade levels, as long as state and local health guidelines are followed.

Schools and districts have been developing plans to reopen campuses, and it is up to the individual school or district to decide how and when to implement those plans. Some schools may decide to open as soon as they are permitted, while others may choose to move forward incrementally, and still others may choose to remain in distance learning based on the needs of the local community.

It is recommended that schools exercise caution when implementing plans to reopen campuses. In all cases, schools must adhere to state guidance in the following documents:

- The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) [COVID-19 INDUSTRY GUIDANCE: Schools and School-Based Programs](#) provides information on face coverings, physical distancing, and other safety measures to consider.

- The [Cal/OSHA COVID-19 General Checklist for Schools and School-Based Programs](#) should also be used to supplement the industry guidance.
- The CDPH [COVID-19 and Reopening In-Person Learning Framework](#) includes information on reopening schools and when to consider resuming distance learning.

The reopening of campuses is incumbent upon local conditions and new state and local health orders. The recommendations in Guidance Amendment #5 are subject to change.

The school planning document for San Joaquin County -- 2020-2021 School Year Planning: A Guide to Address the Challenges of COVID-19 -- was developed by the SJCOE and San Joaquin County Public Health Services in collaboration with superintendents from the county's 14 school districts before its release on June 17, 2020. Aligned with CDPH recommendations and approved by the San Joaquin County Public Health Officer, the document was based on the best available information about COVID-19 in the county at the time of its development and publication. The guidance in the document was subject to revision as circumstances related to COVID-19 changed.

The original planning documents and all amendments can be found at <http://www.sjcoe.org/healthsafety>.

More information and guidance documents can be found at the state's COVID-19 information website at [covid19.ca.gov](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/covid19) and the CDPH website at [cdph.ca.gov](https://www.cdph.ca.gov).