

Bucks County Intermediate Unit (Bucks IU)

Health and Safety Plan for the 2023-2024 School Year

August 15, 2023: Meeting of the Bucks IU Board of School Directors.

This plan is based on previously approved versions of the Bucks IU Health and Safety Plan as approved by the Bucks IU Board of School Directors, removing previous references to outdated and conflicting guidance. The plan is based on guidance approved by the Bucks IU Board of School Directors on the following dates:

- **March 15, 2022:**
 - February 15, 2022: Release of a Change in Understanding Issued by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) regarding the applicability of the United States Department of Health and Human Services Interim Final Rule on Vaccinations for Preschool Early Intervention and Behavioral Health Staff Working with Head Start/Early Head Start and Pre-K Count Students
 - February 25, 2022: Release of Guidance on Masking Issued by the CDC
 - March 1, 2022: Release of Guidance Issued by the Office of Head Start making masks optional for adults when children are not present.
- **May 16, 2022:**
 - Guidance received from the Office of Head Start (OHS) clarifying that the vaccine requirement for Head Start/Early Head Start staff does not apply to outside contractors such as Bucks IU Preschool Early Intervention (PEI) staff providing related services to Head Start/Early Head Start students.

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- Guidance received from the Bucks County Health Department dated May 12, 2022 communicating local health authority expectations for school entities specific to COVID-19.
- **June 21, 2022:**
 - Receipt of Guidance from the Office of Head Start (OHS) as published on the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (ECLKC) website under the heading of “CDC Community Levels Recommendations and Mask Wearing”.
- **September 20, 2022**
 - Approval of the Health and Safety Plan for the 2022-2023 School Year by the Bucks IU Board of School Directors at their regularly scheduled meeting on September 20, 2022.
- **February 21, 2023**
 - Six-month review with requested ratification/approval by the Bucks IU Board of School Directors at their regularly scheduled meeting on February 21, 2023.
- **April 7, 2023**
 - Following March 31, 2023 ruling by United States District Court for the Northern District of Texas vacating nationwide the COVID-19 vaccine mandate for Head Start and Early Head Start programs.
- **August 15, 2023**
 - Six-month review with requested ratification/approval by the Bucks IU Board of School Directors at their regularly scheduled meeting on August 15, 2023.

1. How will the LEA, to the greatest extent practicable, support prevention and mitigation policies in line with the most up-to-date guidance from the CDC for the reopening and operation of school facilities in order to continuously and safely open and operate schools for in-person learning?

The Bucks IU's Health and Safety Plan is informed by guidance from our federal, state, and county authorities. These include and are not limited to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Pennsylvania Department of Health (PADOH), the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), and the Bucks County Health Department (BCHD).

The Bucks IU will continue to work in coordination with these agencies and our local partners to develop and refine expectations that meet all requirements.

The Bucks IU has continually revised this plan as necessary, based on changing guidance, and has now removed previous references to outdated and conflicting guidance, providing a more streamlined versions with each successive version of the plan. In accordance with expectations from PDE, the Bucks IU will continue to update and revise the plan whenever there are significant changes to federal, state, or local guidance, and at a minimum, the Bucks IU Board of School Directors will review the plan at least every six months as required for local education agencies (LEAs) who receive federal American Rescue Plan (ARP) and Elementary and Secondary Schools Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds. Changes will be communicated to all stakeholders.

2. How will the LEA ensure continuity of services, including but not limited to services to address the students' academic needs, and students' and staff members' social, emotional, mental health, and other needs, which may include student health and food services?

The Bucks IU will continue to ensure safe learning and working environments for all Bucks IU students and staff members and will continue to provide in-person instruction during the 2023-2024 school year.

The Bucks IU will continue to ensure all students receive instruction that meets state and federal standards and have the necessary supports for success, including access to technology and connectivity.

The Bucks IU will continue to offer a wide array of social and emotional wellness and health supports, including:

- The Bucks IU will continue to offer resources to staff such as the Employee Assistance Plan.
- The Bucks IU will continue to provide access to licensed social workers, counselors, school psychologists, board certified behavior analysts, and administrators.
- The Bucks IU will continue to implement evidence-based Social Emotional Learning programs for students.
- As feasible, the Bucks IU will continue to provide additional supports to meet the needs of special populations, through the IEP/504 process and/or through our multi-tiered, multi-domain system of support.
- The Bucks IU will continue to provide training, time, support, and flexibility necessary for staff to prepare for successful instruction.
- The Bucks IU will continue to provide proactive, clear communication to all families and staff.

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3. Use the table below to explain how the LEA will maintain the health and safety of students, educators, and other staff and the extent to which it has adopted policies, and a description of any such policy on each of the following safety recommendations established by the CDC.

ARP ESSER Requirement	Strategies, Policies, and Procedures
<p>a. Universal and correct wearing of masks;</p>	<p>Bucks IU students and staff are expected to follow the masking requirements of the locations/facilities to which they are assigned.</p> <p>For locations under the jurisdictional control of the Bucks IU, masks are optional unless otherwise noted.</p> <p>Masking requirement specific to Head Start/Early Head Start Programs: As the federal grant holder for Head Start/Early Head Start funding in Bucks County, the Bucks IU must comply with the masking requirement as it is written in Head Start Program Performance Standard 1302.47(5).</p> <p>Per Guidance Received From the Office of Head Start (OHS) and Published on the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (ECLKC) Website Under the Heading of “CDC Community Levels Recommendations and Mask Wearing”</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>“While reviewing the new CDC recommendations, OHS will not evaluate compliance with the mask requirement in its program monitoring. This pause on monitoring for compliance with the mask requirement will apply to all programs. Before resuming monitoring for compliance with the mask requirement, OHS will provide the grant recipient community with at least two weeks’ notice prior to implementing any changes.”</i></p> <p>Accordingly, and in alignment with OHS, the Bucks IU will not monitor for compliance with the mask requirement in Bucks IU Head Start and Early Head Start Programs. This “pause” on monitoring will remain in effect until additional guidance is received from OHS.</p> <p>(This section is continued on the next page.)</p>

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	<p>Masking requirement specific to Head Start/Early Head Start Programs (continued): In the event the above noted pause specific to masking in Head State and Early Head Start programs is repealed or curtailed by OHS, the following guidance is, accordingly, required for Bucks IU Head Start and Early Head Start Programs:</p> <p>In all Head Start and Early Head Start Programs including certain Pre-K Counts Classrooms, the Head Start Program Performance Standard 1302.47(5) requires:</p> <p>a. All children will wear masks indoors except:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. When eating or drinking; ii. When children are napping; iii. When a person cannot wear a mask, or cannot safely wear a mask because of a disability as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act; or iv. When a child’s health care provider advises an alternative face covering to accommodate the child’s special health care needs. <p>b. All adults will wear masks in the presence of children except:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> v. When eating or drinking; vi. When a personal cannot wear a mask or cannot safely wear a mask, because of a disability as defined by the American with Disabilities Act vii. Being outdoors with young children in Head Start/Early Head Start and Pre-K Count programs inherently includes sustained close contact for the purposes of caring for and supervising children, therefore, all children and adults will wear masks outdoors.
<p>b. Modifying facilities to allow for physical distancing (e.g., use of cohorts)</p>	<p>The Bucks IU will rely on best practices, informed by federal, state, and local guidance, to design and implement high-quality, learner-centered instructional environments. Specifically, the Bucks IU will continue to rely on the BCHD’s guidance to design safe instructional spaces and workspaces for all individuals.</p>
<p>c. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette;</p>	<p>All individuals will continue to be encouraged and reminded to sanitize or wash their hands on a frequent basis.</p>

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	<p>Hand sanitizer will continue to be made available in all common areas, hallways, and/or lobby areas where sinks for handwashing are not available, in order to encourage frequent use.</p> <p>The Bucks IU will continue to post signs in highly visible locations that promote everyday protective measures/hygiene and how to stop the spread of germs.</p> <p>The Bucks IU will continue to include proper personal hygiene in program curricula.</p>
<p>d. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation;</p>	<p>The Bucks IU will continue to follow proper cleaning and sanitizing protocols following CDC, EPA, and manufacturer guidelines.</p> <p>Ventilation remains as a component of available strategies to clean and maintain healthy facilities.</p> <p>Contracted cleaning services will continue on a nightly basis with an increased focus on high-touch items, including cleaning of restrooms, lobby, conference rooms and work areas.</p> <p>On-site maintenance staff will perform cleaning of high-touch items.</p> <p>Transportation staff will perform cleaning of high-touch surfaces on vehicles.</p> <p>Hand sanitizing stations have been installed and will continue to be maintained throughout key areas of the building.</p> <p>All cleaning products utilized are approved on the EPA COVID-19 approved sanitization products list, following the approved application standards. Additional cleaning/disinfecting products are available for staff use as needed - disinfectant wipes, hand sanitizer, hand soap, and paper towels.</p>
<p>e. Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State and local health departments;</p>	<p>The Bucks IU will follow guidance issued by the Bucks County Health Department (BCHD) on May 12, 2022:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals are no longer required to report testing positive for COVID-19 to the Bucks IU. • The Bucks IU is no longer required to report individuals who have reported testing positive for COVID-19 to the BCHD. • Because reporting positive cases of COVID-19 is no longer required, the Bucks IU will no longer send notifications of a

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	<p>positive case to parents and team members from specific classrooms, schools, or offices.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because reporting positive cases of COVID-19 is no longer required and because contact tracing is no longer occurring at the BCHD, the Bucks IU will no longer collect close contact information from any individual who tests positive for COVID-19. As such, the Bucks IU will no longer send the daily close contact tracker to team members. • Normal absence reporting expectations remain in place for any individual who tests positive for COVID-19. Per the BCHD, the predetermined period of isolation and quarantine are no longer required. Instead, an individual who tests positive for COVID-19 should not report to school/work until they have resolving symptoms and have been fever-free for 24-hours without medication. • For students, all normal absence reporting expectations remain in place. • For team members, in the event an absence is required, please follow normal absence reporting requirements, including securing a doctor’s note for an illness that lasts three (3) or more consecutive days. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Per the BCHD, asymptomatic individuals should not be isolated or quarantined from school/work, regardless of exposure to a positive case. • The BCHD does not recommend individuals get tested for COVID-19 if they are asymptomatic. In the event an individual who is asymptomatic does test for COVID-19 and is positive, the BCHD recommends that the individual consider staying home for a day or two to ensure they do not become symptomatic. • The Bucks IU will continue to consult with our partners at the BCHD for any circumstances that require guidance or escalation. • COVID infections will be handled similarly to other conditions in existing school nursing policies. <p>The Bucks IU will continue to follow the guidance of the BCHD, working directly with the BCHD to gather any appropriate information that may be requested.</p>
<p>f. Diagnostic and screening testing;</p>	<p><u>SYMPTOM CHECKING</u></p> <p>Each day, before reporting to any assignment location, all staff (employees and contractors) are expected to self-affirm that</p>

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	<p>they feel well enough to report to work and are symptom-free and fever-free without medication. Parents/Guardians are expected to conduct a similar daily assessment for students.</p> <p>Students, staff, contractors, and volunteers should stay home when they are ill and consult their health care provider for further guidance.</p> <p>All staff (employees and contractors) are expected to follow the pre-COVID Bucks IU attendance reporting procedures. If a staff member has symptoms of any illness, it is expected that the staff member notifies their supervisor and enters the sick time into the appropriate absence reporting system. Any staff member absent for three or more days is expected to submit a physician's certification to HR@BucksIU.org prior to returning to work and the employee/contractor is expected to consult with the Bucks IU HR Department for specific return to work procedures.</p> <p>Bucks IU contractors will be expected to notify their employer and follow the employer's absence reporting procedures.</p> <p>Students experiencing symptoms of illness should stay at home and not report to their school location. Families should follow the Bucks IU and/or school entity's current absentee/attendance procedures.</p>
g. Efforts to provide vaccinations to school communities;	<p><u>VACCINES</u></p> <p>The Bucks IU will continue to partner with federal, state, and local health care agencies to promote opportunities for individuals to receive the COVID-19 vaccination. Previous guidance issued by the BCHD states:</p> <p><i>“The BCHD unequivocally recommends that everyone eligible get vaccinated. The BCHD knows that vaccines are safe, effective, and the best tool we have to mitigate COVID-19. Vaccines are proven to reduce symptoms and substantially reduce death and hospitalizations due to COVID-19. The existing data, both here in Bucks County and nationally, show the overwhelming majority of people getting seriously ill from COVID-19 are those who are unvaccinated. We recommend that school districts consider mandating vaccination for all school staff and teachers, a position supported by National Education Association (NEA) and American Federation of Teachers (AFT)</i></p>

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	<p><i>nationally. Similar requirements have existed, and been successful, for decades.”</i></p> <p><u>VACCINE REQUIREMENTS FOR HEAD START, EARLY HEAD START AND PRE-K COUNTS PROGRAM EMPLOYEES AND CONTRACTORS</u></p> <p>On March 31, 2023, the United States District Court for the Northern District of Texas, struck down, nationwide, the COVID-19 vaccine mandate for Head Start and Early Head Start programs. The ruling is applicable nationwide effective April 7, 2023.</p> <p>Per a statement released by the National Head Start Association (NHSA) effective April 7, 2023 “there will not be a Head Start requirement for vaccination and testing for Head Start, Early Head Start, and Early Head Start–Child Care Partnership grant recipients in all states, tribes and territories.”</p>
<p>h. Appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities with respect to health and safety policies;</p>	<p>The mission of this Health & Safety Plan is to ensure the continuation of in-person instruction and therapy in all Bucks IU programs. This same mission led to the Bucks IU successfully serving students in-person during the 2020-2021, 2021-2022, and 2022-2023 school years.</p> <p>The Bucks IU is a high-quality provider of services for individuals with disabilities, many of whom are served in clinical and healthcare-like settings and/or who reside in congregate care settings, residential placements, and/or healthcare-like settings. The Bucks IU will continue to meet those needs through the IEP/504 process and the multi-tiered, multi-domain system of support model. The Bucks IU will continue to design and follow any individualized health and safety plan for the students we serve.</p> <p>The Bucks IU will continue to train staff and contractors on universal precautions.</p> <p>The Bucks IU will regularly communicate best practices for health and personal hygiene to all stakeholders in an effort to reinforce healthy instructional and work environments. For example, individuals will be reminded to not report to school or to work if they are not well or are experiencing symptoms that would cause them to seek medical attention.</p>

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<p>i. Coordination with state and local health officials.</p>	<p>The Bucks IU will rely on best practices, informed by federal, state, and local guidance, to design and implement high-quality, learner-centered instructional environments.</p> <p>The Bucks IU will continue to facilitate as may be needed ongoing opportunities for discussion and planning with federal, state, and local health authorities, and among local school entities.</p>
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Health and Safety Plan Governing Body Affirmation Statement

The Board of School Directors for the Bucks County Intermediate Unit #22 reviewed and approved this updated and revised Health and Safety Plan on August 15, 2023.

The plan was approved by a vote of:

10 Yes

0 No

0 Abstain

Affirmed on August 15, 2023:

By:


(Signature of Board President)*

John D'Angelo
President, Bucks IU Board of School Directors

Attest:



Beth Bittenmaster
Secretary, Bucks IU Board of School Directors

*Electronic signatures on this document are acceptable using one of the two methods detailed below.

Option A: The use of actual signatures is encouraged whenever possible. This method requires that the document be printed, signed, scanned, and then submitted.

Option B: If printing and scanning are not possible, add an electronic signature using the resident Microsoft Office product signature option, which is free to everyone, no installation or purchase needed.