



INSTRUCTIONAL SERVICES

ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION | CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION | SPECIAL EDUCATION

COVID-19 HEALTH AND SAFETY PLAN

Updated August 30, 2021



www.e1b.org/covid

THIS PLAN IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE AS PUBLIC HEALTH GUIDELINES ARE UPDATED.

Erie 1 BOCES is Committed to Those We Serve
- *Students, Staff and Communities* -
By Understanding, Anticipating, and Responding to Their Needs.

Our Schools

EDGE Academy
Harkness Career and Technical Center
Kenton Career and Technical Center
Maryvale Work Readiness Academy
Northtowns Academy
Potter Career and Technical Center
Winchester Academy
Various Integrated Special Classes in Host Component School Districts Across Western New York



To Our Students, Staff and Families,

The pandemic has been challenging for all of us but it has been particularly difficult for our children. The structure, support and social interaction that school brings is paramount to the growth and development of our young people.

Erie 1 BOCES is committed to the health and well-being of our students and staff. This document is a summary of the most recent health guidelines as recommended by the following entities:

- Erie County Department of Health (ECHDOH)
- New York State (NYS)
- Centers for Disease Control (CDC)
- American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)
- New York State Education Department (NYSED)

This information applies to Kindergarten through Grade 12 programs and services including Erie 1 BOCES Alternative Education, Career and Technical Education and Special Education. As we have learned throughout the pandemic, guidance such as this is fluid and subject to change based on current data, community transmission and knowledge of the disease.

All updated information, including school reopening plans can be found online at www.e1b.org/covid.

On behalf of Erie 1 BOCES, we thank you for your continued support and understanding as we continue to navigate these unprecedented times. Our greatest priority remains serving our students, staff, families and partner School Districts with high quality educational experiences, equality and access. Our faculty is available to address any concerns in meeting your students' academic, social and emotional needs. Please do not hesitate to contact us directly should you have any concerns or questions.

Sincerely,

The Erie 1 BOCES Instructional Services Team
Dr. Lynn M. Fusco, District Superintendent and CEO
Michael Capuana, Assistant Superintendent
Patrick Canfield, Director of Exceptional Education
Christa McHale, Director of Educational Partnerships and Workforce Development
Anedda Trautman, Director of Career and Technical Education

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This information is subject to change as new data, guidance and recommendations emerge. Please check Erie 1 BOCES' COVID-19 webpage regularly for updates, www.e1b.org/covid.

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Communication

Erie 1 BOCES will continue to utilize several communication channels to inform parents, students, teachers, administrators, support staff and the community of general protocols and procedures with respect to the COVID-19 pandemic. These channels of communication include but are not limited to:

- Email and text mass communication via BlackBoard Connect.
- Erie 1 BOCES' COVID-19 webpage (www.e1b.org/covid) will be the primary repository for letters, documents, event headlines and general information.
- Families may email istech@e1b.org for technical support.
- Communication will go out any time a COVID-19 positive case has been determined in the school. Individuals deemed close contacts of the infected individual will be personally notified by Erie 1 BOCES or the Erie County Department of Health as soon as possible.

Universal Masking

When teachers, staff, and students consistently and correctly wear a mask, they protect others as well as themselves. Consistent and correct mask use is especially important indoors and in crowded settings, when physical distancing cannot be maintained.

Erie 1 BOCES will provide students and staff with acceptable face coverings, as requested, at no cost and will maintain an adequate supply of face coverings in case of replacement. Face coverings should continue to be cleaned or replaced after use or when damaged or soiled. Face coverings are not to be shared and should be properly stored or discarded. Personal cloth face coverings should be washed frequently. Disposable surgical masks should be discarded in the trash.

Masking Indoors

Indoor masking is required by the Erie County Department of Health for all individuals ages 2 years and older, including students, teachers, staff, vendors and visitors, regardless of vaccination status. Appropriate masks must be worn at all times in all classroom and non-classroom settings, including but not limited to hallways, school offices, restrooms, gyms, locker rooms, auditoriums, etc.

Masking Outdoors

Masking outdoors is strongly recommended by the ECDOH but not required at this time. Protocols and procedures will be maintained for students and staff to ensure maximized physical distancing to protect against the transmission of the COVID-19 virus on school grounds, especially when masks are not being worn outside. Students and staff who feel more comfortable, may choose to continue wearing a mask outdoors and should feel supported in doing so.

Masking at Mealtimes

Students may remove their masks during meals as long as they sit 3 feet apart, to the extent possible. Staff members will maintain seating charts for the purposes of contact tracing in the event of a COVID outbreak.

Acceptable Face Masks

Masks must be two layers of material and they may be cloth-based or surgical masks that cover both the mouth and nose. Bandanas, gaiters, and clear face shields are not considered acceptable face coverings.

Mask Breaks

Mask breaks may be taken by students once every hour for approximately five minutes. Students should be seated and stationary at their desks during mask breaks. If students are seated closer than 6 feet, breaks will be staggered so students closer than 6 feet are not taking breaks at the same time.

Exceptions to Masking

Individuals who cannot safely wear a mask because of a disability or medical condition should contact the school to request a reasonable accommodation. Schools may require written documentation of a medical or physical condition from a physician or licensed medical provider before providing an exception.

Exceptions may be made for individuals who cannot wear a mask, or who cannot safely wear a mask, because of a disability as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act sections 42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq. or other such disability. Individuals for whom wearing a mask would create a risk to workplace health, safety, or job duty as determined by the relevant workplace safety guidelines or federal regulations may also be exempt from wearing a mask. Exemptions to mask wearing will be made in consultation with school building leaders and Erie 1 BOCES' COVID-19 Safety Coordinator.

Erie 1 BOCES may use alternate PPE (i.e., face shields or coverings that are transparent at or around the mouth) for therapies or interventions that require visualization of the movement of the lips and/or mouths (e.g. speech therapy). These alternate coverings may also be used for certain students (e.g. hearing impaired) that benefit from being able to see more of the employee's face.

Physical Distancing and Close Contact Determination

In support of maintaining in-person learning, physical distancing will be implemented to the extent possible. According to the ECDOH, several studies from the 2020-2021 school year have shown low COVID-19 transmission levels among students in schools that had less than 6 feet of physical distance when the school implemented and layered other prevention strategies, such as the use of masks.

Certain situations may prevent physical distancing from occurring, such as providing essential classroom instruction, medical care, or student comfort/support. Erie 1 BOCES will minimize this contact to the greatest extent possible and continue to ensure appropriate prevention measures such as cleaning/disinfection, masking, hand hygiene, and respiratory etiquette are maintained during these temporary episodes.

Physical Distancing for Students

Erie 1 BOCES will strive to maintain at least 3 feet of physical distance between students within classrooms. This is in addition to mask wearing and an effort to reduce transmission risk. These measures are in place regardless of vaccination status.

Physical Distancing for Staff

Erie 1 BOCES will strive to maintain at least 6 feet of physical distance between staff and students. This is in addition to mask wearing in an effort to reduce transmission risk. These measures are in place regardless of vaccination status. Understandably, physical distancing may be more difficult to maintain in lower grade levels wherein personalized instruction is often necessary.

Staff should carefully monitor breaktimes and meetings, maintaining 6 feet of distancing and adhering to masking at all times, regardless of an individual's vaccination status. Staff meetings should be held virtually whenever possible.

Determining Close Contact Status for Students

When determining close contact status following a COVID-19 exposure, unvaccinated students who were within 3 feet from the positive COVID-19 case for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period during a time the case was infectious will be quarantined regardless of masking. As per the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines, fully vaccinated individuals who are identified as close contacts are not subject to quarantine.

Determining Close Contact Status for Staff

When determining close contact status following a COVID-19 exposure, unvaccinated staff within 6 feet from the positive COVID-19 case for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period during a time the case was infectious will be quarantined regardless of masking. As per CDC guidelines, fully vaccinated individuals who are identified as close contacts are not subject to quarantine.

Cohort

Cohorting means keeping people together in a small group and having each group stay together throughout an entire day. Elementary levels will use cohorts whenever possible. Middle and high schools will typically use period scheduling. All measures of protection, including masking, physical distancing, personal hygiene, etc. will be in place under all learning models.

Health Monitoring

Health Screening

ECDOH requires the use of a daily screening questionnaire for students, staff and visitors reporting to school. The screening consists of a temperature check as well as a COVID-19 symptom check.

COVID-19 Symptoms

COVID-19 symptoms include the following: fever (100°F or higher), chills, rigors, muscle aches, headache, back pain, fatigue, runny nose, congestion, sore throat, loss of smell, loss of taste, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, wheezing, chest pain, cough, abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, dehydration, altered mental status/confusion, and seizures.

COVID-19 Daily Health Screening Questionnaire

1. Are you currently experiencing, or have you experienced in the past 10 days, any signs or symptoms of COVID-19, including but not limited to:
 - Fever (100°F or higher) or chills
 - Muscle or body aches
 - Cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
 - Fatigue
 - Headache
 - Sore throat
 - Nasal congestion or runny nose

- Nausea or vomiting
 - Diarrhea
 - New loss of taste and/or smell
2. Is your temperature 100°F or higher today?
 3. Have you tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 10 days?
 4. Have you had contact with anyone confirmed or suspected of having COVID-19 in the past 10 days?

Developing Illness at Home

Individuals with a temperature greater than 100.0°F, or with one or more symptoms of COVID-19 should not enter the school, regardless of vaccination status. Any staff, student or visitors who present to school with such symptoms will be denied entry into the facility or sent directly to a dedicated isolation area prior to being picked up or otherwise sent home.

Developing Illness at School

If an individual becomes symptomatic while at school, regardless of vaccination status, that individual will be immediately isolated in a supervised, designated containment room and will be assessed by the school nurse or appointed designee. The school nurse or appointed designee will follow all NYDOH and CDC guidelines regarding PPE (i.e. mask, face shield, gown, gloves).

Isolation areas are maintained in every school to house staff and students exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms in a supervised environment by trained individuals. Isolation rooms are thoroughly cleaned and disinfected after use.

Returning to School Following Illness

COVID-19-Like Illness

In order for students or staff to return to school following a COVID-19-like illness, regardless of vaccination status, one of the three following criteria must be met:

1. A negative COVID-19 test is provided. (PCR COVID-19 test is strongly recommended), or
2. A note from the student or staff member's medical care provider with an alternative diagnosis, or
3. There have been at least 10 days since the onset of COVID-19 symptoms.

COVID-19 Positive Case

Students and staff must meet all of the following criteria in order to return to school following testing positive for COVID-19:

1. At least 10 days after COVID-19 symptom onset or 10 days from their first positive test if asymptomatic and,
2. Fever-free for at least 24 consecutive hours without the use of fever-reducing medications and,
3. COVID-19 symptoms are improving.

ECDOH offers free COVID-19 PCR testing to symptomatic Erie County residents and close contacts of confirmed cases. Other local testing sites are listed at www.erie.gov/covidtestsites. COVID-19 diagnostic

testing is fully covered by all health insurance plans per federal mandates.

A negative at-home COVID-19 test result will NOT be accepted to allow a student to return to school or school staff to work.

When the School Receives Notice of a COVID-19 Positive Case

ECDOH requires schools to notify the ECDOH COVID-19 School Team of all positive COVID-19 cases reported by staff, students, or guardians. The school is required to prepare a list of classroom, bus, sports, and extracurricular activities close contacts. "Close contacts" are defined as students who are within 3 feet or staff who are within 6 feet from the positive COVID-19 case for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period during a time the case was infectious, regardless if masks were worn.

Quarantine

Anytime Erie 1 BOCES becomes aware of a case of COVID-19 in the school building it works with the ECDOH to identify potential risk of exposure to students and staff. A first measure in doing so is identifying those in close contact with the individual. "Close contacts" are defined as students who are within 3 feet or staff who are within 6 feet from the positive COVID-19 case for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period during a time the case was infectious, regardless if masks were worn. Along with identifying close contacts, the ECDOH will consider duration of exposure, proximity, and presence of symptoms to determine who is an exposed contact and therefore subject to quarantine. Schools are required to cooperate with contact tracers to determine close contacts and compile contact information. Erie 1 BOCES will work with ECDOH will notify parents and staff who are considered to be contacts exposed to a COVID-19 case.

Fully Vaccinated Close Contacts

Fully vaccinated individuals who are identified as close contacts are not subject to quarantine as per CDC guidelines. However, these individuals should monitor for COVID-19 symptoms and advise the school of any changes.

Fully vaccinated persons who have a known exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 should get tested 3-5 days after exposure and should wear a mask in public indoor settings for 14 days or until they receive a negative test result. If they begin to experience COVID-19 symptoms, they must follow the "Returning to School Following Illness" protocol detailed above.

Persons are considered fully vaccinated for COVID-19 two weeks or more after they have received the second dose of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine or two weeks or more after they have received a single dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

Unvaccinated Close Contacts

Unvaccinated students within 3 feet or unvaccinated staff within 6 feet from the positive COVID-19 case for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period during a time the case was infectious, regardless if masks were worn, will be considered a close contact and quarantined for 10 days from the last day of exposure to the positive COVID-19 case.

Persons who are not fully vaccinated should be tested immediately after being identified, and, if negative, tested again in 5-7 days after last exposure or immediately if COVID-19 symptoms develop during quarantine.

Erie 1 BOCES will maintain seating charts for classrooms and extracurricular activities in the event there is a COVID-19 case in a class. According to the ECDOH, if there is no seating chart, all unvaccinated individuals in the class will be considered unvaccinated close contacts and be quarantined for 10 days from the last day of exposure to the positive COVID-19 case.

Per ECDOH guidelines, regardless of if a seating chart is maintained, if there are two or more cases in a classroom during a 10-day period, all unvaccinated individuals in the class will quarantine for 10 days from their last exposure to the positive COVID-19 case, regardless of masking.

COVID-19 Testing in Schools

The ECDOH and CDC recommends COVID-19 screening testing for students and staff who are not fully vaccinated at least once per week during moderate, substantial, and high transmission levels.

Surveillance Testing

Testing can provide an important prevention strategy and safety net to support in-person education in schools where the transmission risk is moderate, substantial or high. Oral, PCR tests are used for screening testing. PCR tests are considered the most accurate COVID-19 tests available. Surveillance testing tests a random sample of at least 10% of students and staff who are not fully vaccinated. Erie 1 BOCES is currently reviewing options for surveillance testing. Additional information will be forthcoming. Students will only be considered for testing with parental consent.

Proximal Testing

Proximal testing tests all students/staff who were in the same classroom as a COVID-19 case during their infectious period, regardless of proximity in the classroom. This testing is usually done 3 to 5 days after the exposure. Oral PCR tests are used for proximal testing. PCR tests are considered the most accurate COVID-19 tests available. Proximal testing does not include those individuals who are quarantined as a result of a close contact. Erie 1 BOCES is currently reviewing options for proximal testing. Additional information will be forthcoming. Students will only be considered for testing with parental consent.

Cleaning and Disinfection

Rigorous and ongoing cleaning and disinfection of the school occurs at least daily or more frequently as needed. Regular building cleaning and disinfecting practices occurs at the end of each workday, including routine cleaning and disinfecting of work surfaces and areas in the work environment, including restrooms, offices, break rooms, classrooms and other spaces throughout each building.

More frequent cleaning and disinfection for high-risk, high touch areas and surfaces (those used frequently and/or by many individuals) is in place.

Custodial and cleaning staff will also clean and disinfect routinely throughout the day. Custodial staff will

maintain a daily cleaning log documenting date, time, and scope of cleaning. Custodial and cleaning staff will be provided with disposable gloves and masks to perform their cleaning and disinfecting duties.

Erie 1 BOCES follows the hygiene and sanitization requirements from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the New York State Department of Health including the use of disinfectants on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency COVID-19 list:

<https://www.epa.gov/coronavirus/about-list-n-disinfectants-coronavirus-covid-19-0>.

Disinfecting removes any remaining germs on surfaces, which further reduces any risk of spreading infection. If a student or employee becomes sick or tests positive for COVID-19, Erie 1 BOCES will thoroughly clean and disinfect the space.

Ventilation

Improving ventilation is an important COVID-19 prevention strategy that can reduce the number of virus particles in the air. Along with other preventive strategies, including wearing a well-fitting, multi-layered mask, bringing fresh outdoor air into a building helps keep virus particles from concentrating inside.

Erie 1 BOCES will continue to evaluate its ventilation systems to ensure they are working properly, are code compliant and are optimized in the following ways:

- Adherence to a routine maintenance and inspection schedule.
- Windows and doors will be opened to maximize fresh air flow through the classroom and school building whenever possible.
- Diffusers, exhausts, and unit vents will not be blocked or obstructed by cabinets, books, or other materials. The importance of not obstructing diffusers and vents or attempting to modify the ventilation controls will be communicated to staff.
- Erie 1 BOCES will suspend the use of demand control ventilation systems that shut down the percentage of fresh air under certain conditions automatically, unless doing so will degrade indoor air quality.
- Ventilation systems will run throughout the building including bathrooms 24/7.
- Assurance that there is adequate ventilation when cleaners and disinfectants are used to prevent students or staff from inhaling irritating fumes.
- Replacement of existing unit air filters as per manufacturers' instruction and optimization of filtration by upgrading to filters with a minimal efficiency rating value (MERV) of MERV 8.

Continuity of Learning

Erie 1 BOCES will continue to work with the Erie County Department of Health to determine clearly defined measures that will serve as warning signs that the level of COVID-19 transmission may be increasing in school settings beyond an acceptable level.

Any need to decrease the scale or scope of in-person learning due to COVID-19 by quarantining a classroom or school will be considered in consultation with the Erie County Department of Health and Erie 1 BOCES' component partner school districts and in accordance with all NYS and CDC guidelines.

Erie 1 BOCES will utilize its communication plan to notify affected individuals, families and component partnering School Districts throughout the process.

If the transmission of COVID-19 results in the need to reduce in-person learning, instruction will pivot to a remote environment whenever possible and/or students may be provided with asynchronous learning materials. A return to in-person learning will commence at the approval of the Erie County Department of Health.

Sources Consulted to Develop School Guidance Per ECDOH

1. New York State Interim Guidance for In-Person Instruction at Pre-K to Grade 12 Schools During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency:
https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/default/files/atoms/files/Pre-K_to_Grade_12_Schools_MasterGuidance.pdf
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html#physical-distancing>
3. Erie County Department of Health School Guidance (2020-2021):
<https://www2.erie.gov/health/sites/www2.erie.gov.health/files/uploads/pdfs/ECCOVID19schoolguidance.pdf>
4. Erie County Department of Health Youth Sports Guidance (2020-2021):
<https://www2.erie.gov/health/sites/www2.erie.gov.health/files/uploads/pdfs/resuming-higher-risk-sports.pdf>
5. American Academy of Pediatrics COVID-19 Guidance for Safe Schools:
<https://www.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/covid-19-planning-considerations-return-to-in-person-education-in-schools/>
6. New York State Education Department Health Safety Guide for the 2021-2022 School Year
<http://www.nysed.gov/common/nysed/files/programs/back-school/nysed-health-and-safety-guide-for-the-2021-2022-school-year.pdf>