

FAQ's for Parents Regarding Phased Reopening Plan for Special Education Students

1. Which Special Education Students will be returning first as a part of the BCSS Phased Reopening Plan?

The United States Department of Education and the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services notes,

School districts must provide a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) consistent with the need to protect the health and safety of students with disabilities and those individuals providing education, specialized instruction, and related services to these students. In this unique and ever-changing environment, OCR and OSERS recognize that these exceptional circumstances may affect how all educational and related services and supports are provided, and the Department will offer flexibility where possible. However, school districts must remember that the provision of FAPE may include, as appropriate, special education and related services provided through distance instruction provided virtually, online, or telephonically.

The Department understands that, during this national emergency, schools may not be able to provide all services in the same manner they are typically provided. While some schools might choose to safely, and in accordance with state law, provide certain IEP services to some students in-person, it may be unfeasible or unsafe for some institutions, during current emergency school closures, to provide hands-on physical therapy, occupational therapy, or tactile sign language educational services. Many disability-related modifications and services may be effectively provided online. These may include, for instance, extensions of time for assignments, videos with accurate captioning or embedded sign language interpreting, accessible reading materials, and many speech or language services through video conferencing ([Supplemental Fact Sheet, 3/21/20](#)).

Although the provision of FAPE is possible in a distance learning instructional delivery model, the Barrow County School System Special Education Department recognizes greater challenges in providing certain services to some special education students in a digital learning environment. Many of these students are served by adapting the general education curriculum to meet their needs. The students who are served through an adapted curriculum are identified as such through their participation in the Georgia Alternate Assessment 2.0, as determined by the IEP team. Adapted curriculum students typically receive services through a self-contained model of instruction, which is Instruction for students with disabilities in one area of exceptionality for four or more segments of the instructional day.

Additionally, the Barrow County School System Special Education Department recognizes greater challenges in providing certain services in a digital learning environment for special education pre-school students. The Special Needs Preschool classroom is designed for students ages 3-5, identified as having significant developmental delays and/or other medical needs.

*Finally, the Barrow County School System Special Education Department recognizes greater challenges in providing services in a digital learning environment to those students served through a self-contained model of instruction, but who are served through the general curriculum. As such, **special education***

students who are served through an adapted curriculum, students who are served through a self-contained model of instruction, and special education preschool students are a part of the beginning stages of the Barrow County School System phased reopening plan. Remaining special education students will return according to the BCSS Phased Plan for All Students.

2. What does the CDC recommend with regard to COVID-19 for children at increased risk, and what does that mean for my student who has been identified as having the option to return as a part of the BCSS Phased Reopening Plan?

Currently, the CDC provides the following:

Some children may be at increased risk of getting COVID-19 or may be at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19. For these children, parents and caregivers may need to take additional precautions with regard to school re-entry. There are more COVID-19 cases reported among children with intellectual and developmental disabilities than those without [5]. People of any age, including children, with certain underlying medical conditions are at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19. Additionally, children who are medically complex, who have neurologic, genetic, metabolic conditions, or who have congenital heart disease might be at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19, compared to other children. Severe illness means that they may require hospitalization, intensive care, or a ventilator to help them breathe, or may even die ([Children at Increased Risk](#)).

Additionally, the CDC provides this [tool](#) that is “designed to help (parents/families) weigh the risks and benefits of available educational options before (parents/families) make decisions” about children returning to school.

Parents should be informed of the above information to best aid them in making a decision.

Parents of special education students who are served through an adapted curriculum, students who are served through a self-contained model of instruction, and special education preschool students will retain the option for their child to remain served through the distance learning instructional delivery model. Rosters of these students are gathered and cross-referenced against a list of medically fragile students. Teachers of these populations will contact parents and guardians prior to the relative start of school, and share appropriate information regarding items such as personal protective equipment, transportation, general school day schedule, and whether or not the student has been identified as medically fragile.

3. What happens when a child won't wear or isn't able to wear a mask and follow safety/hygiene protocols without assistance?

The CDC provides guidance on the feasibility and adaptations of masks for certain populations ([CDC Guidance](#)). Of note, the CDC recognizes, “In some situations, wearing a mask may exacerbate a physical or mental health condition, lead to a medical emergency, or introduce significant safety concerns. Adaptations and alternatives should be considered whenever possible to increase the feasibility of wearing a mask or to reduce the risk of COVID-19 spreading if it is not possible to wear one.”

Specifically, the CDC notes for example,

Some people, such as people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, mental health conditions or other sensory sensitivities, may have challenges wearing a mask. They should consult with their healthcare provider for advice about wearing masks.

Younger children (e.g., preschool or early elementary aged) may be unable to wear a mask properly, particularly for an extended period of time. Wearing of masks may be prioritized at times when it is difficult to maintain a distance of 6 feet from others (e.g., during carpool drop off or pick up, or when standing in line at school). Ensuring proper mask size and fit and providing children with frequent reminders and education on the importance and proper wear of masks may help address these issues.

*While we understand that not all students accessing adapted curriculum services, as well as special education pre-school students, will be able to wear a mask at all times and engage in hygiene steps, they will continue to receive adult support and prompting, per their IEPs, to help them learn these pertinent daily living skills. **Parents of students with disabilities who are served in self-contained environments should be informed that it is possible that their student(s) may interact with other students who are not able to wear a mask in both the transportation and/or school environments.***

Requests for an exemption from the mask requirement will be considered on an individual basis using the district's process for considering any reasonable accommodation of a student's disability in both transportation and/or school environments.

Other measures that will be used to reduce the risk of COVID-19 in cases where students are unable to wear masks include:

- *Remaining in the self-contained environment with the same peers, and reducing opportunities for these populations to "co-mingle" with other students and staff outside of these environments*
- *Frequent assisted hand-washing*
- *Social distancing when possible*
- *The cleaning and disinfecting of frequently touched surfaces throughout the school day*
- *Additionally, working on an individual basis, solutions will be sought that will best keep all students safe. BCSS is guided by information from the Georgia Department of Education and our Transportation Department. We will not transport more than the suggested number of students on a bus and will adhere to social distancing and safety guidelines as much as possible. All bus drivers will wear a mask.*

4. What precautions are being taken if I select to send my child who is considered part of this targeted population to school?

Barrow County Schools has shared the following information regarding precautions for when students return <https://www.barrow.k12.ga.us/2020-2021-school-year/health-precautions>. This information will apply for students that are returning in the phased reopening. Teachers of students who are non-verbal will have access to a thermometer to take student temperatures upon entering class and during the school day.

Parents should be reminded of the following graphic, COVID-19 Pandemic: Returning to School

COVID-19 Pandemic: Returning to School

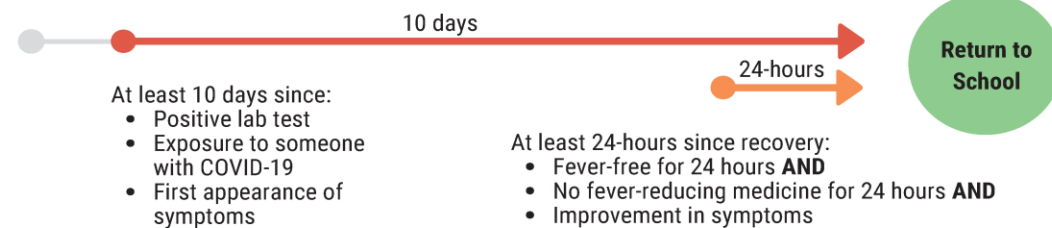
When a person contracts the virus, symptoms may develop within 2 to 14 days from exposure, although some people never show symptoms. It is very important for your own safety and for the safety of others that you monitor your health for 14 days from your last possible exposure to COVID-19, and that you remain at home, avoid congregate settings and public activities, and practice social distancing. Below are the requirements for returning to school.



14 day quarantine for COVID-19

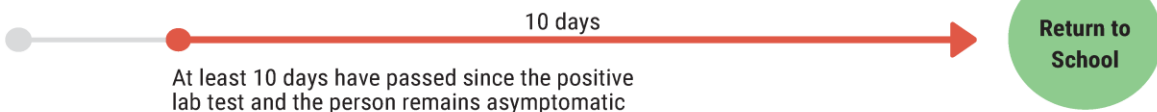
Symptomatic

Individuals with confirmed case of COVID-19 or suspected exposure to COVID-19 that are **showing symptoms**, which may include: fever (100.4+), cough, shortness of breath, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, or diarrhea.

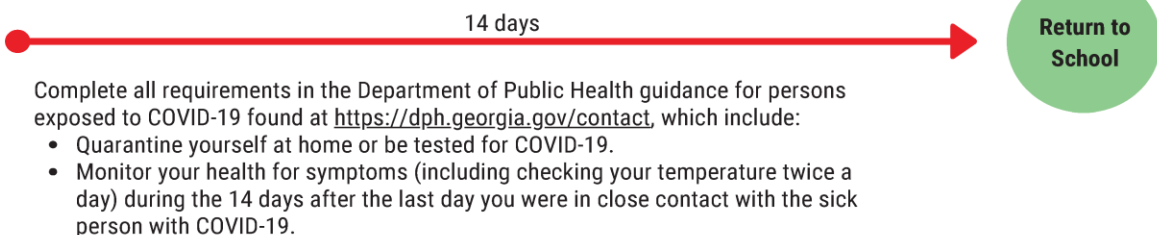


Asymptomatic (No symptoms)

1. Individuals with a confirmed case of COVID-19 but are not showing symptoms.



2. Individuals with a known exposure to someone with COVID-19 but are not showing symptoms.



5. Will transportation be offered for my child if they are in this targeted group?

Yes, transportation will be provided. Adaptive transportation is also provided for students who require it in their IEP.

6. If I choose to opt in for in person instruction will students be attending daily or on a rotating schedule to account for social distancing?

*Students who are served through an adapted curriculum, students who are served through a self-contained model of instruction, and special education preschool students will attend daily. **Remaining, or all other special education students** will return according to the BCSS Phased Plan for All Students, which includes a rotating A/B schedule.*

7. If I decide to opt for my student to return or to engage in digital learning, but then change my mind, what should I do?

For these targeted students, if you opt to have your child come to school, and then decide for them to engage in digital learning, please contact the Program Specialist or Special Education Coordinator for your child's school.

If you opt to have your child engage in digital learning, and then decide for them to come to school, please contact the Program Specialist or Special Education Coordinator for your child's school. In this scenario, please allow 5 days after you have contacted the Program Specialist or Special Education Coordinator for the school and transportation to prepare for your child's return.

8. If my child returns to the school building, will they receive "in-person" related services?

To the extent possible, children who return to school will receive "in-person" related services.