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**MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**  
**Division of Early Intervention and Special Education Services**  
**IMPLEMENTATION BEST PRACTICES & CONSIDERATIONS**

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**TIPs for the Safe Provision of Occupational Therapy (OT) and Physical Therapy (PT) Services Upon Return to In-person Learning**

As communities in Maryland prepare to safely re-open school buildings for in-person learning, Occupational Therapy (OT) and Physical Therapy (PT) practitioners (as direct contact providers) may consider the following tips to help protect themselves, students and school team members from the spread of COVID-19.

| Planning Considerations  | PPE Considerations   |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Consult with occupational health and safety professionals/resources when making plans for in-person services.</li> <li>● Work with administrators to perform a hazard assessment.</li> <li>● Work with administrators to establish safe work practices, including appropriate cleaning and disinfecting practices; provision of the specific types of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) that align with work duties; and accessible, safe classroom space design.</li> <li>● Identify the response plan if exposure to COVID-19 were to occur (contact tracing, testing procedures, closure of classrooms or school buildings).</li> <li>● Ensure enhanced ventilation in service delivery spaces.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Participate in training on the use of PPE, including when to use it, how to determine what PPE is necessary, how to properly don/use/doff PPE, and how to dispose or disinfect PPE.</li> <li>● Routinely use face masks and face shields when working directly with students (especially if students are unable to wear a mask).</li> <li>● Consider the use of gowns and gloves when at risk for exposure to bodily fluids (including droplets from respiration).</li> <li>● To improve mask fit and filtration wear a medical procedure mask closer to the face and a cloth mask on top.</li> <li>● If a related service provider is working directly with a student who cannot wear a mask, there should be consideration in upgrading masks to certified KN95 masks to reduce the risk of transmission of disease.</li> </ul> |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Be clear about how to receive timely communication about school and district-wide safe health practices.</li> <li>● Provide services that prepare students for returning to the buildings (social stories, role playing, managing masks, calming strategies, etc.)</li> </ul> |  |
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| Other Safety Considerations   | Considerations When Visiting Multiple Locations  |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Use physical barriers when possible.</li> <li>● Maintain social distancing of six feet whenever possible.</li> <li>● Limit occupancy in service delivery spaces and offices.</li> <li>● Whenever possible, use outdoor spaces for intervention.</li> <li>● Practice frequent hand washing and carry hand sanitizer. Both the related service provider and the student should wash hands before and after direct contact.</li> <li>● Minimize instances of grouping or co-treating students. If grouping is necessary, avoid mixing cohorts of students.</li> <li>● Minimize the sharing of materials and/or equipment. If sharing of materials is absolutely necessary, make sure that appropriate cleaning protocol is maintained.</li> <li>● Limit hallway movement of groups of students.</li> <li>● When unable to maintain six feet distance from a student, consider limiting direct contact to a cumulative of 15 minutes over a 24-hour period.</li> <li>● Launder work clothes after each use in the warmest appropriate water setting and dry completely.</li> <li>● Carry an extra mask when possible.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Consider to what extent virtual services can augment in-person services to minimize contact between schools.</li> <li>● Minimize the number of classrooms and/or schools visited per day.</li> <li>● Practice good hand hygiene before, during and after visiting each location.</li> <li>● Clean and disinfect materials and/or equipment between each use; use disposable items or items designated for single student use when possible.</li> <li>● Clean and disinfect personal vehicles' commonly touched surfaces after visiting each site and at least once per day.</li> </ul> <p><b>NOTE:</b> The information presented is based on the most recent CDC resources effective 2/19/21. Please stay informed of updates as decisions are made about safe practices.</p> <div> </div> <p>The Maryland State Steering Committee for OT/PT School-Based Programs</p> |

## RESOURCES

Improve the Fit and Filtration of Your Mask to Reduce the Spread of COVID19, 2/17/21  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/mask-fit-and-filtration.html>

Operating schools during COVID-19: CDC's Considerations, 1/8/2021.  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/schools.html>

### **Strategies for Protecting K-12 School Staff from COVID-19, 1/4/2021.**

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-staff.html>

**Guidance for Direct Service Providers, 12/20/2020.** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/direct-service-providers.html>

Considerations for K-12 Schools: Readiness and Planning Tool  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/community/School-Admin-K12-readiness-and-planning-tool.pdf>

Return to School Post COVID-19 Closure Considerations for Students with Disabilities and Special Healthcare Needs, 7/23/2020. [https://higherlogicdownload.s3.amazonaws.com/NASN/3870c72d-fff9-4ed7-833f-215de278d256/UploadedImages/PDFs/2020\\_07\\_23\\_Considerations\\_for\\_Post\\_COVID\\_Return\\_to\\_School\\_for\\_Students\\_with\\_Disabilities\\_and\\_Special\\_Healthcare\\_Needs.pdf](https://higherlogicdownload.s3.amazonaws.com/NASN/3870c72d-fff9-4ed7-833f-215de278d256/UploadedImages/PDFs/2020_07_23_Considerations_for_Post_COVID_Return_to_School_for_Students_with_Disabilities_and_Special_Healthcare_Needs.pdf)

COVID-19 Guidance for Maryland Schools, 1/7/2021, <https://governor.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/MD-School-Reopening-Guidance-1.23.21.pdf>

Physical Education Together Guidelines for Temporary Modifications to Physical Education Programs in Maryland Public Schools, 11/2/20  
<http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/about/Documents/DCAA/PE/Physical-Education-Together.pdf>

How Do I Set Up My Classroom: A CDC Guide for Teachers, 12/29/20?  
[https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/community/schools-childcare/How\\_Do\\_I\\_Set\\_Up\\_My\\_Classroom.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/community/schools-childcare/How_Do_I_Set_Up_My_Classroom.pdf)

HHMEA's Autism Resource Central, Social Stories for Young & Old on COVID-19  
<https://www.autismresourcecentral.org/social-stories-for-young-and-old-on-covid-19/>

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