

Advocacy Update: AzAAP Stresses the Importance of Safe Return to School

Dear Members,

As our state decides how and when to open schools, members of the AzAAP Board of Directors and Advocacy Committee have been working hard to stress the importance of safety considerations as well as ensuring schools receive the support they need to implement new protocols to balance controlling the spread of COVID-19 and fulfilling the optimal educational, nutritional, fitness, and mental health needs of children.

In addition to recently releasing [AzAAP's position statement on school reentry](#) which aligns with CDC and national AAP guidance, the chapter has issued [a letter to our congressional delegation](#) requesting that they provide sufficient funding to help schools adapt and make necessary changes and accommodations so that students, teachers and staff feel safe. Schools will need to follow guidance from public health officials and adhere to health monitoring and cleaning/disinfecting protocols, have sufficient personal protective equipment (PPE) for teachers, staff and students, implement new procedures for busing and transporting students to school, alter before- and after-school child care and enrichment programs, ensure that students competing in athletics and other activities are safe, make physical plant modifications, adjust staffing schedules, and put protocols in place for how a school responds when a student or teacher tests positive for COVID-19.

Legislators, public health and education leaders, and other state officials have been offered the opportunity to speak with Arizona pediatricians to help answer questions about the specific recommendations which focus on mitigating COVID-19 risks. The offer has been met by policy makers responding with their support as well as requesting meetings to discuss the data, health concerns and recommendations. We would like to thank [Dr. Mary Rimsza](#), [Dr. Kristina Wilson](#) and [Dr. Gary Kirkilas](#) for meeting with Representative Michelle Udall, Chairman of the legislature's Education Committee, yesterday to discuss the critical importance of children going back to school, but as soon as it is safe. This meeting has also helped to yield questions from the Governor's office looking for data and expert advice from pediatricians.

[Submit Questions for Chapter Chat on School Reopening](#)

AzAAP is in the process of planning an online learning session to help members navigate this complex topic. A panel of experts will review the school reentry guidance and speak to members about how to talk to parents and address concerns. The panel is now accepting questions direct from members to be addressed during the upcoming learning session.

SUBMIT QUESTIONS NOW to leadership@azaap.org. The date and time for the learning session will be announced shortly.