

American Academy of Pediatrics

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School reopening guidance: A message from the AAP President

Dear Colleagues:

Yesterday, I participated in a roundtable event at the White House with public health and elected officials, including President Trump, to discuss school re-openings and the Academy's [latest guidance](#).

The decision on how to return to school this fall is an incredibly difficult one. Pediatricians, parents and educators all share the same goal of wanting children to be back in the classroom as much as possible, but we must do so in a way that is safe and feasible.

It's unfortunate that our guidance is being politicized by some and misinterpreted to mean a universal return to school no matter what. That is not what we recommend. When public health expertise is reframed to fit political interests, it harms those who have the most at stake and least opportunity to advocate for themselves: children.

As pediatricians, we understand that children get so much more from school than just an education. They also learn social and emotional skills, get healthy meals and exercise, mental health support and other things that cannot be provided with online learning. Schools play a critical role in addressing racial and social inequity. This pandemic is especially hard on families who rely on school lunches, have limited access to the Internet or health care.

We also understand that COVID-19 does not seem to be impacting children nearly as severely as other respiratory illnesses. They tend to get infected less, suffer less extreme symptoms and are less likely to transmit the virus to others.

With these considerations in mind, AAP strongly advocates that the goal should be to have students physically present in school. This should happen with careful measures to keep students and staff safe, and with flexibility to adapt as needed to the community's prevalence of COVID-19. Schools will need new resources to keep students, teachers and staff safe. I am very concerned by recent statements from federal leaders threatening to withhold federal funds from schools that do not pursue in-person reopening in the fall. This would put already financially strapped schools in an impossible position that would endanger the very people we are trying to protect.

I understand this issue hits home for many of us – we are parents ourselves, we have seen loved ones fall ill and die from COVID, we care for children who are at high risk or who live with adults who are at high risk for contracting COVID. We understand the tremendous strain teachers have been under throughout this pandemic, and we empathize with the struggle that so many parents have been enduring as well.

We will continue doing what we've always done, which is to lean into the evidence, prioritize children's health and safety, and use our platform to make a difference. Below are some resources related to our school guidance:

- Updated school re-entry [guidance](#) and [media talking points](#) for pediatricians
- [HealthyChildren.org article](#) for parents on returning to school safely ([here](#) in Spanish)
- Facebook Live [conversation from today](#) with David Hill, MD, FAAP, and AAP President-Elect Lee Savio Beers, MD, FAAP, emphasizing our school re-entry guidance
- An [NPR interview](#) I gave this morning on Morning Edition
- [Infographic](#) checklist for schools to reopen safely, to share on social media

Thank you for all you do for children.

Sincerely,

Sara "Sally" Goza, MD, FAAP

President