



# Safely Returning to In-Person Instruction

**Required Benchmarks and Reporting Process for Schools Operating on the Tohono O'odham Nation**



## Purpose

S-ke:g Taş:

As the Tohono O’odham Nation continues to work toward supporting the good health and safety of all Nation’s members, it is important to establish guidelines and protocols for safely reopening schools. The purpose of the *Safely Returning to In-Person Instruction* document is to provide the required benchmarks the Tohono O’odham Nation will follow when determining it is safe to resume in-person instruction for schools operating on the Nation. As COVID-19 continues to pose a threat to the health and safety of Nation’s members, localized requirements for safely resuming in-person instruction have been established by a *Tohono O’odham Nation Education COVID-19 Task Force (“Task Force”)*.

Task Force members consist of representatives from the Tohono O’odham Nation Education Department, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Public Safety and Medical Technical Advisors specializing in Public Health. The Tohono O’odham Nation’s localized requirements must be met in advance of resuming in-person classroom instruction.

Schools will continue to use other resources, as currently mandated by their schools’ overseeing agencies in the development of “School Reopening Plans,” which align with the Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines. This document is distinguishable from established school reopening guidelines. It specifies localized health data and processes the Tohono O’odham Nation will use to guide decision-making for allowing schools operating within the Nations boundaries to reopen school facilities for in-person instruction.

What follows is/are the:

- 1) Tohono O’odham Nation’s required benchmarks schools will meet before resuming in-person instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic
- 2) Identified benchmarks for reinstating distance learning formats in instances of community wide spread once re-opened
- 3) Tohono O’odham Nation’s reporting process for schools seeking clearance to provide in-person instruction

The Tohono O’odham Nation appreciates working in collaboration with each school site to support the good health and safety of students and staff when determining safe learning options.

Sincerely,



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Ned Norris, Jr., Chairman  
Tohono O’odham Nation



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Wavalene Saunders, Vice-Chairman  
Tohono O’odham Nation

## **School Reopening Dashboard and Guidance**

Reopening of school buildings for in-person instruction is contingent upon three key components:

- 1) Level of spread occurring within the Tohono O’odham Nation
- 2) Quality of school’s mitigation plan
- 3) Preparedness of schools to implement mitigation plan

Tohono O’odham Nation Health Care has created a dashboard tool to assist with decision-making for the types of learning scenario schools may consider for reopening. The COVID-19 Task Force has also provided stipulations for reinstating distance learning models should data demonstrate a need for school building closures once re-opened.

The dashboard will allow schools operating on the Nation to track the overall risk level related to community transmission of COVID-19. The recommended learning scenario, or delivery model of instruction, to schools operating on the Nation will be based on local health data provided by the Tohono O’odham Nation Health Care. This dashboard and guidance applies to five (5) school systems:

- 1) Tohono O’odham Nation Head Start
- 2) Tohono O’odham BIE Schools
- 3) Baboquivari Unified School District
- 4) Living Word Academy
- 5) San Xavier Mission School

To stay current on level of spread occurring within the Nation, schools may access the data dashboard at: [www.tonhc.org](http://www.tonhc.org), which is updated Wednesday of each week.

# Benchmarks and Learning Format

## Benchmarks

Four benchmarks will be used to determine the safe reopening of school buildings for in-person instruction:

- 1) Cases
  - a. Benchmark: two consecutive week decline in the number of cases of two weeks with new case rates below 100 per 100,000 (Tohono O’odham Nation metrics)

Benchmarks	Minimal	Moderate	Substantial
Cases	< 10 cases/100k	10-100 cases/100k	> 100 cases/100k

- 2) Percent Positivity
  - a. Benchmark: two consecutive weeks with less than 7% positivity (Tohono O’odham Nation metrics)

Benchmarks	Minimal	Moderate	Substantial
Percent Positivity	< 5%	5-10% *	> 10%

- ~~3) COVID-like Illness~~
  - ~~a. Benchmark: two consecutive weeks with hospital visits for COVID-like illnesses in the region below 10% (Pima County metrics)~~
- 4) Preparedness
  - a. Benchmark: school demonstrates preparedness by scoring an 80% or higher on the *Tohono O’odham Nation’s COVID-19 Emergency Preparedness and Response Drills*. See p. 6 to learn more about this benchmark.

## Learning Format

The Tohono O’odham Nation Health Care dashboard tool will delineate the learning format based on the level of spread occurring within the Tohono O’odham Nation. Learning formats include (1) Virtual [students participate in distance learning with no students learning in physical school buildings] (2) Hybrid [some students in physical school buildings and some students distance learning] and (3) Traditional [all students in physical school buildings].

### 1) *Virtual*

Virtual learning is required when benchmarks fall within the substantial (red) community spread category and substantial (red) in percent positivity for two consecutive weeks.

### 2) *Hybrid Learning*

To begin hybrid learning (some students in physical buildings and some students distance learning), the Tohono O’odham Nation requires (1) cases fall within the moderate (yellow)

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community spread category (2) percent positivity is less than 7% positive cases for two consecutive weeks and (3) schools demonstrate preparedness for in-person instruction by scoring an 80% or higher on the *Tohono O’odham Nation’s COVID-19 Emergency Preparedness and Response Drills*.

### 3) *Traditional Learning*

To move to Traditional learning (all students in physical buildings), the Tohono O’odham Nation requires (1) benchmarks fall within the minimal (green) community spread category in cases (2) the minimal (green) category is met for percent positivity for two consecutive weeks and (3) schools in-person instruction preparedness is met by scoring an 80% or higher on the *Tohono O’odham Nation’s COVID-19 Emergency Preparedness and Response Drills*.

## **Continued Data Monitoring upon Re-opening**

Once schools begin offering in-person instruction (Traditional or Hybrid), the Task Force will continue to monitor the level of community transmission on the Nation. If community spread begins to increase, the Task Force will connect with each school site to begin discussions about a potential need to return to physically-distanced learning. The medical technical advisors to the Task Force will determine the need for distance learning in schools operating on the Nation.

A rise in community spread will guide the Nation’s reinstatement of modified learning formats, based on the following:

- 1) The Nation’s risk level has gone from **Minimal** to **Moderate**.
  - a. The Task Force will require that school decision makers begin planning a transition from Traditional to Hybrid to reduce in-person learning at physical locations the first week that the data changes.
    - i. If the Nation remains at the higher level of community spread for a second consecutive week, the Nation will require that schools shift to Virtual instruction.
    - ii. If the second week of data reverts back to the lower level of community spread, no change to the current learning scenario is recommended.
- 2) The Nation’s risk level has gone from **Minimal** to **Substantial** OR **Moderate** to **Substantial**
  - a. The Task Force will require that school decision makers begin planning a transition from Traditional or Hybrid learning to Virtual the first week that the data changes. If the Nation’s level of community spread remains high for a second consecutive week, the Nation will require that schools shift to Virtual instruction.
    - i. If the second week of data reverts back to the lower level of community spread, no change to the current learning scenario is recommended.

The Tohono O’odham Nation Education COVID-19 Task Force will remain in communication with schools regarding the latest COVID-19 community health data and school-related guidance for reopening. The Task Force can provide local guidance in interpreting the benchmark data and

in identifying mitigation resources that outline strategies schools may implement to reduce the spread of COVID-19 among students and staff.

## **COVID-19 Emergency Preparedness and Response Drills Explained**

It is critical to evaluate the preparedness of schools to implement and enforce protocol that will minimize the risk of transmission and spread of COVID-19 in schools. Under the advisement of medical experts, school sites operating on the Nation will complete a series of COVID-19 emergency preparedness and response drills. The Tohono O’odham Nation’s Office of Emergency Management will work in direct collaboration with each school site to administer the drills and assess the school’s overall preparedness. The drills are designed to simulate actual events schools will encounter in a school day that could increase the risk of transmission and spread. The schools’ ability to adequately respond to the simulations will be rated using the following scale:

- 90-100%: High level of preparedness demonstrated
- 80-89%: Moderately high level of preparedness demonstrated, minor adjustments required
- 70-79%: Moderate level of preparedness, requires re-evaluation
- 69% and below: Low level of preparedness, requires significant adjustments (*school will be provided guidance to reaching higher levels of preparedness*)

To determine the level of school preparedness, each school site will complete exercises that demonstrate their ability to effectively implement their school reopening plans including, but not limited to:

- 1) Student school entrance and exit
- 2) Bus pick-up and drop off
- 3) Campus transitions: restrooms, office, class to class, etc.
- 4) Sick-student simulation: on campus isolation, protocol for parent/guardian pick-up, staff support
- 5) Sick-staff simulation: teacher, bus driver, cafeteria support, janitor, admin.
- 6) Student wellness check simulation
- 7) Staff wellness check simulation
- 8) Campus Emergency protocols for fire drills and lock downs

To initiate the COVID-19 emergency preparedness drills, schools are required to submit the following documents to the Tohono O’odham Nation’s COVID-19 Task Force:

- School Reopening Plan
- Other related supporting documents such as:
  - Reopening schools safely- COVID-19 Assessments Report (CDC walk through and report documents)

Once the supporting documents are submitted, the appropriate drills will be implemented for this site. The drills will take place in advance of schools re-opening with each school site identifying a sample group of staff to participate in the drills. Completing and demonstrating preparedness

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through the *COVID-19 Emergency Preparedness and Response Drills* with a score of 80% or higher is required before re-opening schools for in-person instruction. Schools that *do not* demonstrate preparedness will be provided guidance and support from the Nation's Office of Emergency Management as they refine and/or adjust their mitigation plans.

The drills will continue as a regular practice within all schools to the extent that COVID-19 continues as a public health concern and can be initiated by either the school or the Task Force.

## **School Reopening Plan Review and Approval**

All school reopening plans will be reviewed by the Task Force prior to schools reopening for in-person instruction (Hybrid or Traditional). To initiate the review process, school leaders will submit their School Reopening Plans to the Tohono O'odham Nation's Executive Director of Education: [jeffers.choyguha@tonation-nsn.gov](mailto:jeffers.choyguha@tonation-nsn.gov).

The plan will be reviewed within a week's timeframe and initiate the *COVID-19 Emergency Preparedness and Response Drills*. Once this benchmark is met with a score of 80% or higher, along with the cases, percent positivity and COVID-like illness benchmarks, the school site will be approved for reopening. Approved plans will receive a letter from the Tohono O'odham Nation Chairman and Vice Chairwoman authorizing the school to begin in-person instruction. Schools with non-approved plans and/or not meeting all four benchmarks will receive guidance from the Task Force for strengthening their plan or other pertinent information.