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**GUIDANCE MEMORANDUM**

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**TO:** SPCSA-Sponsored Charter School Boards and Administrators  
**FROM:** Rebecca Feiden, Executive Director, State Public Charter School Authority  
**SUBJECT:** Recommendation for School Re-Opening  
**DATE:** August 5, 2020  
**CC:** Jhone Ebert, Superintendent of Public Instruction  
Allison Combs, Policy Director, Office of the Governor

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**Recommendation for School Reopening in August 2020**

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to create an evolving situation across our state, both in terms of the state of COVID-19 transmission in our communities and in terms of the prevailing guidance and directives. On August 3, 2020, Governor Sisolak announced that Nevada will implement a targeted, county-level approach to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 that will rely on weekly, county-level data used to identify counties with Elevated Diseases Transmission. In addition, the Washoe County and Southern Nevada Health Districts have been developing outbreak response plans, specific to the school-setting that are expected to be released in the coming weeks. While [Emergency Directive 022](#) gives charter school governing boards the responsibility of approving charter school re-opening plans, based on recent developments as outlined in the Background section below, I am making the following recommendation for all SPCSA-sponsored charter schools located in Clark, Elko and Washoe counties.

SPCSA-sponsored charter schools located in Clark, Elko and Washoe counties scheduled to open prior to August 24, 2020 should open under a distance education model, with possible limited exception for students significantly impacted by loss of in-person instruction in alignment with Section 8 of Emergency Directive 028. These schools should continue to operate under a distance education model through at least August 21, 2020. This will allow schools to monitor the newly released data and criteria and review updated guidance expected to be released by local health districts in order to potentially prepare for a hybrid or in-person opening with a more complete understanding of the local circumstances.

Based on additional information released in the coming weeks, this recommendation may be extended and/or adjusted. In addition, the State Public Charter School Authority may hold a special board meeting regarding the re-opening of sponsored charter school.

## **Background**

On June 9, 2020, Governor Sisolak signed [Emergency Directive 022](#), which outlines the requirements for school districts and charter schools to “develop plans for reopening school buildings, providing instruction, and related activities for the 2020-2021 school year based on [Nevada’s Path Forward, a Framework for a Safe, Efficient, and Equitable Return to School Buildings](#) and pursuant to any requirements prescribed...and any [additional guidance](#) issued by the Nevada Department of Education.” The directive goes on to say that “Charter Schools shall present their plans [to their governing body] for approval in a manner prescribed by their sponsor at least 20 days before the first day of the 2020-21 school year.”

At the June 26, 2020 meeting of the State Public Charter School Authority (SPCSA), the Authority approved a motion prescribing the process for SPCSA-sponsored schools to approve and submit their re-opening plans. In short, schools must present their plans to their governing bodies for approval no less than 20 days before their first day of school, then plans must be submitted to SPCSA staff who will subsequently provide re-opening plans to the Nevada Department of Education.

On July 28, 2020, Governor Sisolak signed Emergency Directive 028. Major changes in this directive include 1) adopting the American Association of Pediatricians’ and the Governor’s Medical Advisory Team’s recommendations of three feet social distancing for Pre-k – 8<sup>th</sup> grade students and on school buses, but maintaining six feet social distancing requirements for high schools and for all adults, 2) requiring face coverings for all K-12 students and staff, except with a documented medical vulnerability and approval of the building leader, and 3) putting in place a process for districts and schools to request a variance from health and safety protocols under certain conditions.

On August 3, 2020, Governor Sisolak announced that the Nevada Health Response Team had developed a “long term strategy for mitigating the spread of COVID-19 in Nevada through a targeted approach – all centered back to our original goal of making our response state managed and locally executed.” Along with this announcement, the Governor’s Office released a new document: [Road to Recovery: Moving to a New Normal](#). This new strategy relies on reviewing weekly data to evaluate each county for Elevated Disease Transmission based on newly established criteria. A county flagged for Elevated Disease Transmission will enter an assessment and review process that may impact the response and restriction in that county.

While these criteria are new, Nevada used similar [metrics](#) during the month of July to make decisions about restriction on the operations of certain local businesses. These predecessor metrics indicated that several counties, including Clark, Washoe and Elko Counties, have shown Elevated Disease Transmission.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> While seven counties were initial identified for Elevated Disease Transmission, three were subsequently removed. The four remaining counties identified for Elevated Disease Transmission are Clark, Elko, Nye, and Washoe.