



Department of

Education

School Closure Toolkit for Districts: Staffing

Updated 3/25/20

I. Summary

During times of closure, it is important to consider the impact to all staff members, in addition to students.

The purpose of this document is to help district leaders think through staffing-related decisions during school closures in response to COVID-19. The document includes the following:

- Checklist for staffing decisions and related actions
- Best practices for managing employees who are working onsite, including hourly employees
- Recommended schedules and procedures
- List of resources for school and district leaders

Note: This document should be used in conjunction with the *Employment Decisions: COVID-19 Guidance [document](#)* on the TDOE's COVID-19 webpage. As noted in the guidance document, only the director of schools and the local board of education, through local board policies, may address personnel matters such as staffing decisions during school closures.

For questions related to staffing, please contact David.Donaldson@tn.gov, Chief of Human Capital. Local board attorneys may also contact Christy.Ballard@tn.gov, General Counsel, to schedule a call to discuss any questions they have.

II. Checklist

Contact your HR director

Check first with your HR director and (if applicable) board attorney to understand any limitations you may have in directing staff according to your employee handbook, board policy, contracts or any other related considerations.

If possible, ensure staff will continue to be paid (which includes maintaining their health insurance premiums); this will go a long way in alleviating immediate concerns.

Create a staffing plan

Gather your cabinet, and potentially school leaders (depending on the size of your district), to determine a staffing plan. The plan should include:

- To whom employees should report during the closure
- Where they should report (e.g., their school building, work from home)
- What they are expected to do during their work time
- How to support hourly employees (see, *"Potential duties for onsite hourly employees,"* below)

When thinking through which employees need to be onsite and which do not, address the following questions:

- Is use of the building absolutely essential, or can the necessary tasks be completed virtually?
- Does the employee's presence in the building increase safety (e.g., employees who clean and sanitize the building) or decrease safety (e.g., lead to large gatherings that put people at risk)?
- If use of the building is essential, how will the school/districts implement CDC-aligned protocols for employees' safety (see, *"CDC guidelines for onsite employees,"* below)

Develop a communications plan

Effective communication should be a top priority during this time. Once a staffing plan is determined, develop a clear communication plan to inform all staff. The plan should include:

- Information from the staffing plan (see above) should include where employees should report, to whom, and expectations around work tasks. The earlier that guidance can be provided as it relates to reporting location, the better. Specify that as the situation evolves, certain staff may become essential (i.e., must report to their building) who are not currently scheduled to do so.
- Statement around flexibility for employees who need childcare coverage (e.g., ability to work from home)
- Guidance for employees who must report to their worksites, including CDC [recommendations](#) around social distancing and halting all large gatherings
- Guidance on how staff should spend their time while schools are closed.* For educators, the Academics resource section provides guidance around preparing for delivery of instruction via multiple delivery models. For non-instructional staff, principals and central office supervisors should develop lists of activities to be accomplished.
- Contact information where employees can direct any questions

**Guidance around work-from-home best practices is provided in the Resource List section of this document.*

III. Best Practices

CDC Guidance for Onsite Employees

If it is determined that it is necessary for some employees to report to their building, plans should be in place to allow for social distancing to the extent possible, in line with Centers for Disease Control and Protection (CDC) [guidelines](#). As [recommended](#) by the CDC:

- Large gatherings and close contact should be avoided,
- Staff should practice hand hygiene,
- Frequently touched surfaces should be thoroughly and regularly [sanitized](#),
- [Symptoms](#) of COVID-19 should be posted around the building, and
- Staff who are feeling sick should not report to work

Note that staff who are asked to report to their building may have concerns, such as a lack of access to childcare or being a member of a population that has been [identified](#) as especially vulnerable. These employees may need accommodations or contingency plans.

Potential Duties for On-Site Hourly Employees

For districts that choose to identify alternative work for hourly employees, options might include the following:

- **Nutrition staff**—Meal creation, packaging and delivery for children: Ensure all school nutrition programs meet CDC guidelines around minimizing large crowds and sanitization processes
- **Custodial staff**—Cleaning and disinfection: Cleaning and sanitizing school buildings, equipment, etc. in accordance with CDC environmental cleaning and disinfection [recommendations](#)
- **Bus drivers**—Cleaning and disinfection: Cleaning and sanitizing school buses
- **Maintenance staff**—Repairs or maintenance of the building or grounds that are currently needed or that may normally have been completed during scheduled breaks when students are out of school
- **Emergency and safety personnel**—Checking fire alarms, IT, safety equipment, building locks, etc.; reviewing and updating safety and evacuation plans
- **Paraprofessionals**—Professional development, materials development, or organization:
 - Professional development: Free online professional development resources, existing PD resources (e.g., related to textbook adoption)
 - Materials: Photocopies; laminating, or other support for developing instructional materials
 - Organization: Filing, organization of library books or materials, long-term projects
- **Administrative professionals or other hourly personnel**—Organization: Filing, organization of library books or materials, long-term projects

Tasks assigned to hourly staff should ideally be related to their regular work and staff should be paid at the rate specified in their existing contract.

Offsite Employees

Work tasks for employees who are not expected to report to their building will vary as determined locally by the district. The checklist above includes questions to help determine who should be available at the worksite and who should remain offsite. As noted in the checklist, the first step should be to consult with the district's HR

director and/or attorney to ensure all decisions are in accordance with existing policies.

IV. Recommended Schedules and Procedures

Onsite employees should follow regular hours in accordance with their employment contract. In addition, for offsite employees, implementing clear protocols around communication, as well as daily and weekly expectations is vital. Below are a checklist and templates to assist in communicating schedules and procedures.

Checklist

- Before closing:** Ensure employees are provided with the following (see template below): Schedules, reporting locations, expected duties, necessary resources, contact information
- During closing:** Establish regular check-in for ensuring employee wellness as well as progress monitoring of work assignments.
- After closing:** If possible, provide instructional staff an opportunity to return a day before students to get reacquainted to their classrooms, have team meetings, and ensure materials are set for students' return. It may be useful to revisit first day of school protocols to inform this process.

Template: Onsite Employees

Employee Title: [Insert]

Reporting Location (select one)

- Regular worksite: [Insert address]
- Alternate worksite: [Insert address]

Schedule

The workday will begin at: [Insert time] and conclude at [Insert time]

Expected Duties

The following is a list of tasks to complete during your time onsite

Description of task	Expectations—What success looks like

Resources

Here are the materials and resources you will need to complete the tasks above:

Resource	How to acquire/access the resource

Questions?

If you have any questions, contact [Insert name and contact information].

Template: Employees Working from Home

Employee Title: [Insert]

Reporting Location: Work from home

Schedule

The workday will begin at: [Insert time]; the workday comprises [Insert number] hours

Expected Duties

The following is a list of tasks to complete during your time onsite

Description of task	Expectations—What success looks like
Check ins and communication	[Insert expectations around how often to check in, with whom, using what system/software, etc.]

Resources

Here are the materials and resources you will need to complete the tasks above:

Resource	How to acquire/access the resource

Questions?

If you have any questions, contact [Insert name and contact information].

V. Resource List

Working from Home

Twelve ways to work remotely during COVID-19: <https://knowledge-leader.colliers.com/editor/12-ways-to-work-remotely-during-covid-19/>

COVID-19 has my team working remotely: A Guide for Leaders:

<https://www.gallup.com/workplace/288956/covid-teams-working-remotely-guide-leaders.aspx>

Leading remote workers: The coronavirus' impact on effective management:

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/jasonwingard/2020/03/13/team-working-at-home-because-of-coronavirus-heres-how-to-lead-them-effectively/#7510447d3162>

COVID-19 FAQs and 10-point action plan for educational institutions: <https://www.fisherphillips.com/resources-alerts-covid-19-faqs-and-10-point-action>

Technology

How to Use ZOOM for online learning: <https://blog.zoom.us/wordpress/2020/03/13/how-to-use-zoom-for-online-learning/>

Microsoft, Google, and Zoom are trying to keep up with demand for their now free work-from-home software:

<https://www.vox.com/recode/2020/3/11/21173449/microsoft-google-zoom-slack-increased-demand-free-work-from-home-software>

Free internet access during Coronavirus:

<https://www.internetessentials.com/covid19>

Microsoft Teams: [https://products.office.com/en-us/microsoft-teams/group-chat-](https://products.office.com/en-us/microsoft-teams/group-chat-software?&ef_id=EA1aIQobChMIzMu2wo6g6AIVUdyGCh3b1gnIEAAYASAAEgK5xvD_BwE:G:s&OCID=AID2000955)

[software?&ef_id=EA1aIQobChMIzMu2wo6g6AIVUdyGCh3b1gnIEAAYASAAEgK5xvD_BwE:G:s&OCID=AID2000955_SEM_EA1aIQobChMIzMu2wo6g6AIVUdyGCh3b1gnIEAAYASAAEgK5xvD_BwE:G:s&gclid=EA1aIQobChMIzMu2wo6g6AIVUdyGCh3b1gnIEAAYASAAEgK5xvD_BwE](https://products.office.com/en-us/microsoft-teams/group-chat-software?&ef_id=EA1aIQobChMIzMu2wo6g6AIVUdyGCh3b1gnIEAAYASAAEgK5xvD_BwE:G:s&OCID=AID2000955_SEM_EA1aIQobChMIzMu2wo6g6AIVUdyGCh3b1gnIEAAYASAAEgK5xvD_BwE:G:s&gclid=EA1aIQobChMIzMu2wo6g6AIVUdyGCh3b1gnIEAAYASAAEgK5xvD_BwE)

Seven Google teamwork tools for online collaboration: <https://www.makeuseof.com/tag/google-teamwork-tools/>

General Guidance

Coping with stress during an outbreak: <https://store.samhsa.gov/system/files/sma14-4885.pdf>

How to talk to children about the coronavirus:

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/health/2020/02/28/talking-children-coronavirus-keep-simple-avoid-stress/4906147002/>