



SAN MATEO
COUNTY
OFFICE OF
EDUCATION

COVID-19 School Guidance Frequently Asked Questions

Parents and other community members often inquire about who writes the guidance that allows schools to reopen and governs their operations during the COVID-19 pandemic. Below are some frequently asked questions to help unpack how guidance is developed.

Where does the COVID-19 school guidance originate?

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), California Department of Public Health (CDPH), and San Mateo County Health (SMC Health) communicable disease experts review research studies, assess public health conditions, and develop public health guidance to ensure schools can operate safely.

Sometimes, not all of these public health organizations will release the same guidance at the same time. When this occurs, the more restrictive guidance must be followed.

Who oversees San Mateo County Health?

The San Mateo County Board of Supervisors has oversight for all of its county departments, including San Mateo County Health. The Supervisors represent different district trustee areas and the supervisors are elected by the voters who reside within those district boundaries.

What role does the County Office of Education play in providing health and safety guidance?

The San Mateo County Office of Education collates the relevant local, state, and federal public health guidance concerning COVID-19, and publishes in a single document. This document is the *Pandemic Recovery Framework*, which continues to be updated as public health guidance changes. All schools and school districts across the county have used the *Pandemic Recovery Framework* to develop their reopening plans.

The San Mateo County Office of Education does not write the health guidance – that is the role of public health agencies. What the San Mateo County Office of Education does is support school districts and schools by providing technical assistance in implementing the health guidance. Providing tools like the *Pandemic Recovery Framework* and related trainings and technical assistance helps districts and schools establish safe and consistent conditions for in-person learning.

Who decides when a school would reopen to in-person learning?

Schools are governed by their elected board of trustees. The school board reviews and votes to approve a school district's reopening plan.

