

VIRTUAL TOWN HALL RECAP | 8 MIN READ

Medical Guidance for School Reopening (Part 1)

[REGISTER NOW](#) for the June 25, 8pm EST webinar
Medical Guidance for School Reopening (Part 2)



On June 18, 2020 the RestartED Team hosted their third in a series of Virtual “Town Hall” discussions with educators and professionals devoted to rethinking, reimagining and restarting our schools in a post-pandemic society. Panelists explored best practices for mitigating health risks as state departments of education and school districts across the country work to safely reopen schools. The national panel of experts in the field of nursing, health, and education included:



Michael S. Kelly of Loyola University Chicago, Professor and Director of the School Mental Health Advanced Practice Certificate; and

Lisa Kern, Pasco County Schools, Florida, School Health Supervisor; and

Jay Majka, Superintendent Matawan-Aberdeen Regional School District, New Jersey; and

Mary Beth Miotto, Worcester, Massachusetts, Associate Medical Director of Pediatric Population Health; and

Liz Pray, Moses Lake School District, Washington State, President Elect for the School Nurse Organization of Washington.

Greg Tufaro, USA TODAY network journalist, opened the night with a thoughtful introduction of the issue for discussion and then moderated the hour long conversation.

Panelists discussed three major areas as we look to safely reopen our schools. These include:

Managing shifting local, state and national guidance

Panelists shared collective consternation regarding continually shifting or limited guidance for reopening expectations for schools. Expectations surrounding mask usage served as an example of how divergent school districts are exploring multiple possibilities across the nation. Palpable apprehension exists regarding the utilization of masks as the state by state approach that may run counter to current CDC guidelines illustrated the fragmented nature of the pandemic response. Dr. Kelly pointedly noted we are in a “flashpoint” moment and must more deeply explore **WHY** critical and simple methods of prevention are not being followed across the country and must understand how those dynamics will play out in schools during the fall. He lamented the potential to add trauma to students if we attempt to **Restart** schools with plans that might not be fully informed by science in our schools. Mrs. Kern labeled such an approach vague and “up in the air” warning that such guidance could have a potentially dangerous impact for the medically fragile students and high risk staff and faculty in schools.

Providing scaffolded supports that balance health and emotional needs

The process of **Rethinking** school health based supports include the need to develop scaffolded approaches to serving all students. School leaders must grapple with the unintended consequences of students not attending schools. These range from simple healthcare needs that may not be met in the home to more embedded processes of helping families mitigate and manage health and emotional trauma. To prepare for September, school leaders should be ensuring teams are meeting now in order to effectively implement reopening plans in the fall. Particularly for school dependent children, scaffolded approaches will be critical for effective transitioning back to the schoolhouse.

Supporting and expanding the role of school based health care professionals

Panelists implored school leaders to **Reimagine** the role of school based health care professionals. Never has the Intersection of health, social-emotional needs and learning been laid bare than during the COVID-19 crisis. School nurses, counselors and other faculty need to be included in the role-out of planning to ensure that all interventions align to the developmental stages of children. The scarcity of school nurses within many school systems across the nation are a significant barrier to implementing such cross based planning opportunities. As all re-entry plans should assume a significant number of students that will not physically return to the schoolhouse, planning for how these health care professionals can be embedded into the larger virtual school fabric needs to be undertaken now. The physical spaces within the buildings of nurse offices, counseling hubs and other areas that focus on the basic physical social-emotional



4 Steps to Reconnect Children Post-COVID-19

student needs need to be altered to accommodate social distancing, serve as triage areas for the sick and develop spaces that continue to provide direct services to students in need. Our healthcare professionals are critical partners in this redesign process!

Panelists and participants shared the resources below to assist in our planning processes:

[Why We Need SSW Research on COVID-19](#)

[\(Updated\) SSW Practice During a Pandemic: Our Full Free SSWNetwork Series](#)

[Massachusetts Guidance on Required Safety Supplies for Re-Opening Schools](#)

[Reopening Washington Schools 2020 Planning Guide](#)

[CSNO COVID-19 Health Services Recovery Plan Resource Guide in Educational Settings](#)

[Massachusetts Nurses Association Guidance on COVID-19](#)

[Washington State Nurses Association Guidance on COVID-19](#)

