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South Carolina Chapter
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American Academy of Pediatrics

DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™



South Carolina Chapter

July 1, 2020

RE: SC Schools and COVID-19

To whom it may concern:

On behalf of the South Carolina Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (SCAAP), we, as child health experts, are writing to encourage schools to ***implement plans for the coming school year that allow children to be physically present in school.*** We are eternally grateful for the work of our educator colleagues and appreciate that schools serve as a source of education, counseling, food, structure, stability, physical activity, rehabilitative services (i.e., physical, occupational, speech therapy), and, in many cases, love and kindness. Based on scientific evidence, we are in full support of safely resuming in-person school for the following reasons:

- Our children and families have experienced significant unanticipated consequences during this pandemic since school closure in spring of 2020, including increasing deleterious mental health effects (worsening anxiety and depression, suicide attempts or completed suicides) and less child abuse and neglect reports yet in the face of increasing child abuse and neglect instances seen by pediatricians and pediatric subspecialists. Educators are crucial to children being monitored for their safety.
- Current data suggest that children are less likely to be infected with SARS-CoV-2 (virus that causes COVID-19 disease) than adults, and when infected they are more likely to be asymptomatic or mildly symptomatic. This virus clearly behaves differently than others such as influenza.
- Current data suggest children are also not as likely to carry and spread the virus to others such as teachers, parents, grandparents, etc.
- Schools play a critical role in addressing racial and social inequity. This pandemic is especially hard on families who rely on school lunches, have limited access to the Internet or health care.

Full guidance from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) regarding physical distancing, disinfection, immunization, special education, hallways, playgrounds, meals, testing and screening, face coverings and personalized protective equipment, and mental health support of children and employees can be found at <https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/covid-19-planning-considerations-return-to-in-person-education-in-schools/>.

AAP and CDC resources can guide schools and educators to provide a safe environment for children, teachers and staff. The pediatric infectious diseases physicians in SC have also graciously volunteered to provide additional assistance and can be contacted via email (addresses at the end of this letter). The pandemic is dynamic and leaders will need to be flexible and nimble, ready to switch gears as the situation evolves. We are happy to assist in any way possible in this unprecedented transition and appreciate your time and consideration.

Respectfully,


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