

Inviting Lessons Learned and Best Practices for Operating Safely During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The U.S. Department of Education's *Safer Schools and Campuses Best Practices Clearinghouse*

On January 21, 2021, President Biden issued Executive Order (E.O.) 14000 directing the U.S. Department of Education to create the *Safer Schools and Campuses Best Practices Clearinghouse*. The Clearinghouse will be a place to highlight lessons from the field in support of young children, students, families, early childhood providers, teachers, faculty, and staff, as early childhood programs, schools, and campuses continue to reopen following closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Clearinghouse will include a collection of lessons learned and best practices submitted by early childhood providers, teachers, faculty, staff, early childhood programs, schools, districts, institutions of higher education, , other places of educational instruction, and States describing approaches to operating during the COVID-19 pandemic that the submitters believe to have worked well in their contexts.

The Clearinghouse will include resources that target the needs of young children, students, early childhood providers, families, teachers, faculty, and staff in:

Early childhood programs

PreK-12 schools

Colleges and universities

It will address three major topics related to operating safely during the COVID-19 pandemic:

- **Safe and Healthy Environments:** Early childhood program, school and campus approaches to implementing the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) recommended mitigation strategies and preparing for and sustaining in-person operations safely. This includes recommendations across all grade and age levels of students served, with focus both on reopening buildings and programs for the first time as well as keeping them open safely.
- **Providing Supports to Young Children and Students:** Early childhood, school and campus strategies to meet young children, student social, emotional, mental health, developmental, academic, financial, and other needs, including access to food and other basic needs. This includes a specific focus on the most vulnerable learners and ensuring that resources provided by early childhood programs, schools and campuses will be able to connect with and meet the needs of those disconnected from learning.
- **Early Childhood Provider, Teacher, Faculty, and Staff Well-Being, Professional Development, and Supports:** Early childhood program, school and campus strategies to address the social, emotional, health, and other needs of early childhood providers, teachers, faculty, and staff.

The U.S. Department of Education looks forward to receiving descriptions of what the field has identified as lessons learned and best practices on these topics. These submissions should be sent via email to: Bestpracticesclearinghouse@ed.gov.

Submissions from the field should include substantive materials, which might include fact sheets, step-by-step guidance, policies or regulations, sample agreements among partners (e.g., between a local education agency and a local health agency, or an employee union), ready-to-implement resources, videos or other media focused on how to implement practices, and descriptions of how strategies have been implemented. Generally, submissions from the field **should not** include or reference materials such as commercial advertisements, vendor solicitations or products, and editorials. Submitters may include the actual materials or links to them.

Submissions should include:

- (1) contact information
- (2) topic (e.g., safe and healthy environments; providing supports to young children, students, and families; and early childhood providers, teacher, faculty, and staff well-being, professional development, and supports)
- (3) target audience (e.g., early childhood, PreK-12, postsecondary)
- (4) A short description (two to three sentences)
- (5) what makes it a lesson learned or best practice
- (6) whether there is a focus on racial equity and/or another equity focus, such as a focus on historically underserved populations

Submitters should be careful to include only information that can be made publicly available.

In addition, the U.S. Department of Education is publishing in the *Federal Register* a Request for Information that provides more information regarding this solicitation.

Each submitter will be notified of the U.S. Department of Education's receipt of the submission and whether their submission will be included in the Clearinghouse. Note that the U.S. Department of Education will not include all submissions in the Clearinghouse, and submissions that are included may be modified. Further, the U.S. Department of Education will not include commercial product endorsements, nor any strategies that are not legally supportable or that may lead a user to violate Federal law. Submissions will be reviewed beginning immediately and will be considered on a rolling basis. Inclusion of or publishing of any submissions in the Clearinghouse website does not necessarily equate endorsement from the U.S. Department of Education or from the Federal government, nor is it a certification of the effectiveness of the suggestion. The intention is to catalyze learning about the ongoing health crisis and how it affects our early childhood programs, schools, and campuses in real time. We encourage early childhood providers, teachers, faculty, and staff to use these resources as they develop their paths to safely reopening in-person learning.

Thank you in advance to all submitters for sharing lessons learned and best practices with the nation!