

## **HEALTH AUTHORITY ORDER**

**TO: ALL INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICTS AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS OPERATING IN TRAVIS COUNTY**

**FROM:** Mark E. Escott, MD, MPH, Interim Health Authority, City of Austin/Travis County

**DATE:** 7/14/2020

### **Re: Order of Control Measures for In-Person School Campus Instruction**

WHEREAS, the situation regarding COVID-19 in Travis County, Texas is rapidly evolving with observed rapid rate of transmission through community spread as demonstrated by a sharp increase in new cases and increased hospitalizations and ICU admissions.

WHEREAS, the Texas Education Agency (“TEA”) does not have general authority to close schools due to public health, and TEA acknowledges that such authority lies with the local health authority, the Department of State Health Services, and the Governor.

WHEREAS, data indicates that if schools open for on-campus instruction on the currently scheduled date multiple students and staff will arrive at the campus already infected with COVID-19.

Therefore, due to the current evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic in Travis County, and pursuant to Texas Health & Safety Code §§ 81.082 and 81.084, Dr. Mark E. Escott, the Interim Medical Director and Health Authority for Austin/Travis County, hereby issues this Order imposing specified control measures and restrictions on all public and private schools offering instruction to students in one or more grades, pre-kindergarten through grade 12 in Travis County, as well as any independent school district within Travis County (hereinafter “school systems”). The following restrictions are effective as of the execution of this Order:

- School systems shall not re-open schools for on-campus, face-to-face instruction until after September 7, 2020;
- Virtual instruction shall be permitted as per a school system's own plan;
- Extracurricular sports and activities shall not take place until school systems re-open for on-campus instruction;
- At least two weeks prior to re-opening for on-campus instruction and on-campus activities, the school or district shall develop a plan to be submitted to the Austin/Travis County Health Authority for re-opening on-campus activities and instruction and make the plan available for parents and general public.

I believe this order includes appropriate control measures based on the higher risk for spread of COVID-19 in schools due to the necessity of large groups gathering in indoor spaces and the difficulty for children to follow social distancing and hygiene guidelines. After consultation with appropriate stakeholders, direction and guidance for re-opening schools for on-campus instruction will be issued prior to September 7, 2020.

This order is issued under my authority as Medical Director for Austin Public Health and Health Authority for the City of Austin and Travis County, on this the 14th day of JULY, 2020.



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