

Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) Technical Assistance (TA) Center

Dear Mr. Shapiro,

Thank you for contacting the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Supportive Schools (OSSS) and its Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) Technical Assistance (TA) Center with your request for information on personal protective equipment (PPE) acquisition and distribution at the state level for education agencies during the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. We appreciate your patience as we conducted research to provide you with a comprehensive response.

Identify Essential Staff Needing PPE

This is a critical topic, and it is important to protect staff, students, and families before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic. As school personnel and other local education agency staff return to schools and as schools reopen according to decisions made in collaboration with local public health departments, schools may need resources, such as PPE access, to ensure that disease transmission prevention measures are in place. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) fact sheet on [protecting workers during a pandemic](#) offers some key considerations regarding communication, training, and control measures. Providing PPE to employees is one workplace control that is mentioned in OSHA's [Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19](#).

The Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) fact sheet on [addressing PPE needs in non-healthcare setting](#) addresses acquiring PPE during shortages and asking key questions before making requests:

- “Do you employ essential critical infrastructure workers?”
- “Have you implemented all possible PPE use reduction strategies?”
- “Have you sought regulatory relief or implemented approved alternatives?”
- “Is the PPE needed considered ‘scarce or threatened medical supplies?’”
- “Have you properly defined the need?”

Supports for Estimating PPE Quantities

- It is also recommended to submit a request for assistance to your state emergency management agency and work with the [Maine Department of Labor Workplace Safety and Health Division](#).
- The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has created a [PPE Burn Rate Calculator](#) to help plan for the use of PPE during the COVID-19 pandemic. This spreadsheet-based model was designed for healthcare facilities, but may also be useful for non-healthcare facilities.



If you have questions or need additional assistance, please contact the REMSTA Center at (855) 781-REMS (7367) or info@remstacenter.org.

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- The CDC also offers [strategies to optimize the supply of PPE and equipment](#) for healthcare professionals.
- Additionally, it is important to provide training on how to properly put on PPE gear, as well as how to properly take off PPE gear to help preserve the supply. The CDC provides information on [using PPE](#), and OSHA recommends “[providing workers with up-to-date education and training on COVID-19 risk factors and protective behaviors \(e.g., cough etiquette and care of PPE\)](#).” Ensuring the proper fit and use of PPE is equally as important.
- The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health offers a PPE [self-inspection checklist](#). OSHA also recommends the following regarding [PPE](#):
 - “Selected based upon the hazard to the worker.”
 - “Properly fitted and periodically refitted, as applicable (e.g., respirators).”
 - “Consistently and properly worn when required.”
 - “Regularly inspected, maintained, and replaced, as necessary.”
 - “Properly removed, cleaned, and stored or disposed of, as applicable, to avoid contamination of self, others, or the environment.”

The type of PPE to consider includes gowns, gloves, respirators, surgical masks, face shields, aprons/smocks, safety glasses/goggles, and protective eyewear. Teachers, aides, and school nurses are among school personnel who may have the highest frequency of contact with students. Administrators and office staff may have the highest frequency of contact with families, visitors, and other school personnel. Consider the amount of PPE each role within the school will need and whether different individuals require different types or amounts of PPE based on their roles and responsibilities.

PPE Funding and Distribution Initiatives

The purchase and distribution of PPE are eligible for funding under FEMA’s [Public Assistance \(PA\) Program](#). More information on [eligible emergency protective measures](#) is available. Your state colleagues helping to administer the program for Maine’s Department of Emergency Management might have information relative to other sectors and vocations and their use of PPE, as well as the related “burn rate.”

The PA Program is state led, and, due to its unique considerations, the models put forth by each state might vary based on their unique governance and resources. Using schools as an example and considering many of the essential continuity of operations services that they offer to states and localities, there may be flexibility for how states design those programs.

In brief, school districts work in partnership with their local emergency management partners and nonpublic schools work in partnership with their state emergency management agency to



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initiate the process. However, as noted above, states do have some flexibilities, as they have been given new authorities to use the PA Program in response to COVID-19. Furthermore, FEMA has

- Adapted the PA Program application process in response to COVID-19;
- Created a Simplified Application Process; and
- Extended the 30-day application deadline requirement nationally and will keep Requests for Public Assistance (FPAs) open for the duration of the nationally declared Public Health Emergency, unless the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Assistant Administrator of Recovery Directorate recommends that an earlier deadline is appropriate. (A 30-day advanced notice will be provided if the deadline changes or is extended by a Regional Administrator.)

Please see the attached detailed description of FEMA’s PA Program in response to the pandemic, which includes education-specific considerations we recently developed with FEMA.

We hope that you find the information provided in this response helpful. If you have any additional questions or would like to continue the conversation, please do not hesitate to reply to this message. For additional resources and information on emergency preparedness, please visit the REMS TA Center [Website](#), call us toll free at 1-855-781-REMS [7367], and follow us on [Twitter](#).

Thank you, once again, for contacting the REMS TA Center. We appreciate you reaching out to us for assistance!

Sincerely,
OSSS and the REMS TA Center team

About the REMS TA Center

Since 2004, the REMS TA Center has provided free safety, security, and emergency management training, tools, technical assistance, and information to schools, school districts, institutions of higher education, local education agencies, state education agencies, and their community partners, including law enforcement, fire officials, and public and mental/behavioral health practitioners. Efforts focus on providing supports to help these groups create high-quality emergency operations plans and increase their preparedness capacity in consideration of the five preparedness missions—prevention, mitigation, protection, response, and recovery. Topic-specific support—in collaboration with Federal partners—is provided in emergency management functions (e.g., continuity of operations and lockdowns), threats and hazards (adversarial and human-caused threats, biological hazards, natural hazards, and technological hazards), and planning basics and principles (e.g., meeting the needs of those with access and functional needs).



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