

# Reopening Schools Safely During COVID-19

## Using Survey and Implementation Measures for Wellness



The COVID-19 pandemic has created sudden and long-lasting challenges in educational settings across the United States. Schools are facing the challenge of protecting the health of students, families, and educators as classrooms reopen. Not only are administrations working against learning loss, social and emotional learning challenges, and changes in testing measures, but they also have to consider public health strategies to promote widespread wellness. COVID-19 mitigation strategies in schools—along with district and school relationships and public health expertise—are paramount in continuing to reopen schools safely.

### Path to Success

By working with schools and capturing data through surveys, RTI International can partner with you to

- Explore how education systems adapt to widespread, but potentially varied, vaccination rates among students and staff members
- Understand the potential spread of COVID-19 variants
- Evaluate more permanent changes to health protocols to protect staff members, students, and families who may still have health risks.

Our approach involves using cutting-edge tools and methods to develop and maintain a healthy school environment. We rely on our experts to translate complex health and education data—leading to intelligent evaluation design, purposeful sampling, rapid data collection and compilation, and sound analysis.

### RTI Capabilities and Experience

With capabilities ranging from school-based research to emergency preparedness, we offer a variety of solutions that promote healthy and safe K–12 schools.

#### Mixed-Methods, School-Based Research

##### U.S. Participation in the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS)

To measure student reading achievement at the 4th-grade level as well as school and teacher practices related to instruction, RTI conducted the U.S. data collection of PIRLS 2016 for the National Center for Education Statistics. PIRLS consists of a student reading assessment, student survey, teacher and school administrator surveys, and a national curriculum questionnaire to provide evidence to help counties better prepare students to read, comprehend, and interpret online information.

#### Health and Emergency Preparedness in K–12 Schools

##### School Emergency Preparedness Study (SEPS): Status Assessment at the State, District, and School Levels

Funded by the National Institute of Justice, SEPS assessed school preparedness for events of catastrophic violence at the state, district, and school levels. The study entailed (1) analyzing state education agency website information related to guidelines and mandates for emergency preparedness, (2) conducting a national survey on violence-emergency preparedness at the district level, (3) reviewing documented plans and procedures, and (4) interviewing school personnel.

By systematically analyzing violence-emergency operations plans at multiple levels, this study yielded practical knowledge that education systems can use to improve the safety of students and staff members in schools.

## COVID-19 Epidemiology

### Improving Clinical and Public Health Outcomes Through National Partnerships to Prevent and Control Emerging and Re-Emerging Infectious Disease Threats

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines and other government health recommendations were not effectively reaching Hispanic workers, a population at a disproportionate risk of COVID-19 infection and other adverse health outcomes. RTI partnered with CDC to bridge this gap by adapting and disseminating CDC guidelines through Spanish-language health media, training public health practitioners to provide critical infection control and prevention guidance in Hispanic communities, and evaluating the outcomes of these

strategies. Adopting new strategies—such as distributing public health guidance through trusted intermediaries to Hispanic communities—to prevent and control infectious diseases promotes public health among high-risk populations.

## Public Health Campaigns

### Teen Pregnancy Prevention Evaluation Study

Funded by the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, this study evaluated sexual risk-taking prevention programming for high school students. Over 3 months, the study assessed changes in 9th- and 10th-grade students' attitudes and knowledge about healthy relationships, safe sex, and risky behaviors and compared outcomes for within-school cohorts of intervention and comparison students. The evaluation used both quantitative and qualitative data from a variety of sources—including surveys, key informant interviews, and classroom observations—in 14 schools.

## Featured Scientists



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### Contact us for more information about collaborating to promote healthy and safe K-12 Schools.

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## Data-Driven Public Health Decision Tools

- [RTI SynthPop™](#)—Allows for modeling of community transmission using detailed local environmental and social data
- [RTI's COVID-19 Data Insights Tool](#)—Includes county-level, longitudinal COVID-19 case data combined with a synthetic population dataset—RTI SynthPop

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