

TO: Vision/Screening Personnel
FROM: IDPH Vision/Hearing Program
RE: Vision/Hearing Screening for the 2020-2021 School Year

While the IDPH Administrative Rules require annual hearing/vision screening for certain ages/grades, they do not specify when during the school year the screening must occur. Screeners may want to consider postponing their screening activity until later this school year, particularly in areas which have moderate or high COVID 19 transmission rates. Schools will face a very challenging situation this Fall as they work to implement COVID 19 mitigation protocol. School staff will need some time to adjust and develop routines for handling the new protocol that are required. Virtually every aspect of school activity will need some adjustment to accommodate the new health safety protocol. Waiting until later in the school year will allow time for new routines to be set up and fine-tuned.

As you may know, the Illinois State Board of Education, in conjunction with the Illinois Department of Public Health, issued guidelines for conducting in-person instruction in Illinois schools when the 2020-2021 school year begins. This document, dated 6/23/2020, can be found at:

<https://www.isbe.net/Documents/Part-3-Transition-Planning-Phase-4.pdf>

In addition, ISBE released an FAQ document on this topic, last updated July 9, 2020, which can be found at: <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/FAQ-Part-3-Transition-Guidance.pdf>

Information on use of face shields may be found at:

<https://www.isbe.net/Documents/IDPH-Update-Appropriate-Use-Face-Shields.pdf>

The CDC also provides guidance information for schools at:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/schools.html>

and

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/community/School-Admin-K12-readiness-and-planning-tool.pdf>

The information included in these documents does not specifically address vision/hearing screening in schools/preschools. However, the information provided does have application to the vision/hearing screening process. ISBE guidelines for **Phase 4** in-person instruction in schools require schools to follow IDPH guidelines, which provide the following:

- Require use of appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), including face coverings;
- Prohibit more than 50 individuals from gathering in one space;
- Require social distancing be observed, as much as possible;
- Require that schools conduct symptom screenings and temperature checks or require that individuals self-certify that they are free of symptoms before entering school buildings;
- Require an increase in schoolwide cleaning and disinfection.

When you do start vision/hearing screening you want to consider all aspects of the process with a view to COVID 19 mitigation.

- Have adequate PPE supplies on hand before each screening session (masks; gloves; disinfecting wipes and/or spray; hand sanitizer.)
- Group conditioning can be done in each classroom.
- Limit the number of students taken into the screening room at one time. Maintain a 6 ft. distance between students who are waiting to be screened.
- If a student appears to be ill, postpone screening for another day and follow the school protocol for managing the student at that point.
- Students and screener must wear face coverings. You may consider using a face shield IN ADDITION to a face mask. IDPH does NOT recommend using a face shield in lieu of a face mask (see link titled: *IDPH-Update-Appropriate-Use-Face-Shields*, listed above.) After use, the front of the face covering is considered contaminated and should not be touched during removal or replacement. Hand hygiene should be performed immediately after removing and after replacing the face covering.
- Instruct students to refrain from touching instruments during the screening process.
- Wipe down all surfaces with disinfecting wipe or spray after each child is screened, including table on which the instrument is placed, exposed surfaces of the instrument, any surface the child may have touched. Use wipes or sprays of at least 70% alcohol and dry completely. Vision equipment exposed surfaces should be wiped with disinfecting wipes or spray used with a paper towel. The audiometer headset should also be wiped down. DO NOT spray any product onto the audiometer earphones, as it may clog or damage the transducer in the earphone. Disinfecting products for use on the audiometer headset, such as Audio Wipes or Sani-Cloth wipes, do not contain alcohol and can be found on the internet. Repeated wiping of the audiometer headphone cushions with an alcohol based product can damage the cushion material over time.
- If you are using the GoodLite InstaLine instrument, you must disinfect the pointing board and everything the child may have touched after each child. As an alternative, you might try making copies of the pointing board on pieces of paper and use a new copy for each child. Small paper medicine cups could be used for occluders and disposed of after each child.