



Stable Group Recommendations from Sonoma County Department of Health Services

Below, you will find the official stable group guidelines recommended by Sonoma County Department of Health Services (SCDHS). These guidelines add flexibility to the directives shared at the March 3 webinar for secondary schools. The following guidelines are updated to be consistent with neighboring counties.

Stable Group Recommendations

- The State requires that schools limit as much as possible the number of stable groups that each individual student or staff member is a part of [for example, trying to limit in-person stable groups to two (2), plus one (1) extracurricular activity, for elementary schools, and three (3), plus one (1) extracurricular activity, for secondary schools is a way to accomplish this goal. Stable groups should also remain as consistent as possible; for example, keeping stable groups the same for at least three (3) weeks.] The less the mixing, the less the exposure and risk to the school community.
- When students move between more than one stable group, then the risk of transmission increases, and the greater the need for school administrators to consider how to offset the risk through mitigation measures, for example: routine surveillance testing.
- Elementary grades should be able to maintain fewer stable groups than high school in general. However, up to three stable groups per child may be appropriate in order for schools to offer special education, other forms of targeted instruction, school busing, and after-care.
- For secondary grades, multiple stable groups per child may be necessary to accommodate classes and extracurricular activities. While there is no absolute limit to the number of stable groups, mixing **should be limited** as much as possible and balanced by the following mitigation measures.

Recommended Mitigations for Stable Groups Mixing

- The importance of mitigation measures, such as routine surveillance testing, increases when there is mixing between stable group. For testing guidance, the state has provided recommendations based on the color tier. (In purple and red tiers, it is recommended every other week at a minimum.)
- Stable group size is determined by the capacity of the room and ability to maintain at least a four (4) foot separation between students, although schools should attempt in good faith to try and achieve at least a (6) foot separation between students, or be able to demonstrate how this is not feasible and how they plan to offset the increase in risk of transmission between students. Teacher and other staff desks must be separated at least six (6) feet away from student and other staff desks. Keeping groups small will help minimize exposure.
- Use A/B scheduling to help minimize class size
- Single class sections or zero periods may want to consider the use of virtual distance learning to help reduce the number of stable groups within a day.
- It is recommended that stable groups remain intact for at least three weeks to help minimize exposure between groups.
- Use appropriate PPE/social distancing and cleaning surfaces between groups.
- Minimize number of days any one student is on campus and length of day exposure
- Have one day per week be full distance learning to minimize overall exposure