

Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: Supporting Children's School Re-entry Amid COVID-19**

According to the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), local education agencies and individual schools that planned for students and staff to return following COVID-19 closures should have prioritized efforts to address social and emotional learning and mental and behavioral health needs. Equally important is ensuring that staff feel their physical and mental health needs are supported. Districts should ensure all policies or recommendations are culturally sensitive and ensure equity and access for all youth.

Addressing the academic skills gap remains an important objective; however, students will not be ready to engage in formal learning until they feel physically and psychologically safe. Establishing that sense of safety may take weeks or even months, depending on the evolving context in individual communities and a range of factors unique to each individual. Even within a school community, individual students and staff may be continuing to experience different stressors that could affect their personal sense of safety. Schools should not rely on individuals to create and implement support plans in a patchwork fashion. District-level leadership can ensure a multitiered system of supports that addresses both academic skills and emotional and behavioral health. Schools and districts should make sure these supports are consistently available to all students and adults in each building.

- According to NASP, Schools and districts should:
- Acknowledge students have had inconsistent behavior and academic expectations for the previous several months.
- Expectations and appropriate behavior should be explicitly and regularly retaught.
- Focus should be placed on positive and effective discipline practices within a multitiered system of supports.
- View behaviors through a trauma-informed lens and as a potential symptom of deficits in regulatory skills and a prolonged adjustment period.
- Implement culturally responsive, restorative practices.

Avoid punitive discipline such as suspension or expulsion that forces the student to leave the school environment, except for the most severe cases that put other students or staff in danger.

Anticipate student defiance or resistance as a method of establishing control. Many students may feel disempowered, victimized, abandoned or resentful. Others will have lost trust and faith in the school's ability to care for and protect them or may experience emotional numbing. Adults working with these students should develop ways to empower students and provide unconditional positive support to build trust. Take extra time for relationship building.

The National Association of School Psychologists is the major national professional organization for school psychologists in the United States. Its stated mission is to "represent and support school psychology through leadership to enhance the mental health and educational competence of all children. For more information please visit [www.nasponline.org](http://www.nasponline.org).

To learn more about the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition please follow us on [www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition](https://www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition) or visit SAFE's website to learn more about the COVID-19 Epidemic and its correlation to increased mental illness in youth and adults and alcohol and substance use at [www.safeglencove.org](http://www.safeglencove.org).