



COLORADO PUBLIC & CHARTER SCHOOL PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT GUIDANCE 2020 - 2021 SCHOOL YEAR

As School Districts across the State are preparing to start the 20/21 school year, they are coming up with innovative ideas to meet the guidelines provided by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, the Colorado Department of Education, the Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment, and the mandates of their local school boards and public health officials to limit the spread of COVID-19. Some of the ideas involve the change of use of spaces, rooms, and/or areas within school buildings or the addition of partitions or other means to separate class cohorts. Whenever a space, room, or area is repurposed or separations are constructed, even if these changes are only meant to be temporary, the school must apply for a building permit and potentially an applicable fire code permit, through which it will be confirmed that the adopted codes, which provide a minimum standard for achieving life safety in the built environment, are being met. When a permit is applied for, a review of the project will take place to verify that life safety issues are addressed to meet the requirements of the various adopted codes, such as:

OCCUPANT LOAD

Occupant load of a space, room, or area is determined by the use of that space, room, or area. Occupant load is used to determine exiting requirements, how much ventilation is needed, what the sanitation requirements are, and what fire protection systems are to be installed.

MEANS OF EGRESS

Exiting the building in the event of an emergency is achieved through the means of egress. The means of egress begins with an occupant's first step to leave their currently occupied space and includes such things as adequate clear paths in rooms, corridors, stairs, ramps, doors, and door hardware. Elements in the Means of Egress must be of a certain size, have the correct number of doors that open in the required direction with the proper hardware, depending on the number and capabilities of occupants using that portion of the means of egress.

VENTILATION

The ventilation or fresh air and filtration requirements are of special concern for limiting the spread of COVID-19. There must be enough ventilation to keep outside air moving in the space, room, or area without creating a system that uses excessive energy.

SANITATION

Sanitation is important for limiting the spread of viruses, such as COVID-19. There must be adequate accessible hand washing and toilet fixtures within a certain distance from all spaces, rooms and areas.

FIRE ALARM

With the construction of new walls or barriers fire alarm notification devices may need to be added or relocated to ensure that renovated spaces, rooms, or areas receive appropriate fire alarm signals.

AUTOMATIC FIRE SUPPRESSION SYSTEMS

With the construction of new walls or barriers automatic fire suppression systems, such as fire sprinklers, may need to be modified to ensure adequate coverage.

It is imperative that this type of work is being reviewed by the Division or the qualified local jurisdictions - the Prequalified Building Department or the Qualified Fire Department or both - via the applicable construction permit process. If you have questions relevant to this process, please do not hesitate to reach out to our offices at 303-239-4100 or at cdps_dfpc_construction@state.co.us.