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LDF Releases Recommendations for School Operation During COVID-19 Pandemic

Today, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) released its recommendations for reopening schools while prioritizing both public health as well as racial equity. The recommendations—including policies such as a universal mask mandate, a requirement that all adults working at schools are vaccinated, and continuous data-driven engagement between schools and their communities—are intended to ensure that all students receive the academic and social benefits of in-person school attendance without avoidable risks to public health. Finally, the recommendations highlight some of the many ways that the pandemic’s harms have disproportionately fallen on Black communities, before urging districts not to put Black parents in the position of having to choose between the health and the education of their children.

“The number one priority for all school districts should be the safety of their school community,” explained Kesha Moore, Senior Researcher and Development Specialist with LDF’s Thurgood Marshall Institute. “School districts should enforce universal mask mandates, as well as mandatory vaccination for staff, and take care to comply with the most up-to-date public health recommendations. If schools cannot provide safe in-person learning spaces, especially given the Delta variant’s increased threat to children, they must provide high-quality distance learning and access to school-based services.”

“Vulnerable students are being left behind,” added LDF Policy Counsel Hamida Suad Labi. “From discontinuing or inaccessible meal services to failing to provide access to high-speed internet and electronic devices for distance learning – these are choices states and school districts make, and they place a disproportionate burden on students of color and students who are economically disadvantaged. A racial equity lens on safe school reopening and operation demands that schools prioritize closing the digital divide, replacing punitive practices – such as school-based law enforcement – with trauma-informed care and other mental health services, and ensuring that state and federal education funding is distributed equitably. As families across the country continue to grapple with massive challenges, it is crucial that schools continue to provide students, parents and educators the support they need.”

LDF recommends that states and school districts adopt the following principles to ensure their reopening is both racially equitable and safe:

- Protect public health, including by implementing vaccination requirements for staff and a universal mask mandate.
- Ensure equitable access to school resources during COVID-19 school closures.
- Establish equitable, pedagogically-sound, and culturally inclusive instruction and assessment.
- Social and emotional learning must be prioritized.
- An equitable education requires equitable school funding.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, LDF has been committed to advocating for students and their families. During the 2019-2020 school year, LDF repeatedly advised governors and local governments to continue providing school-based meals and accessible remote learning. LDF also pushed the Department of Education to engage in data collection throughout the pandemic to ensure there is accurate information on concerns around school discipline practices, teacher access, and student connectivity, and joined over 50 civil rights organizations urging Congress to provide broadband internet to low-income Americans. Read and download LDF's recommendations for schools reopening [here](#).

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Founded in 1940, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) is the nation's first civil and human rights law organization. LDF has been completely separate from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) since 1957—although LDF was originally founded by the NAACP and shares its commitment to equal rights. LDF's Thurgood Marshall Institute is a multi-disciplinary and collaborative hub within LDF that launches targeted campaigns and undertakes innovative research to shape the civil rights narrative. In media attributions, please refer to us as the NAACP Legal Defense Fund or LDF. Follow LDF on [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#).