



Guidance for the Safe Operation of the AAA School Safety Patrol amid COVID-19

The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) has posted guidance to assist school districts in decision-making. The guidance in this document is offered to AAA School Safety Patrol program sponsors in schools that have been officially designated as safe to reopen. All guidance is based on CDC recommendations.

Schools and school program sponsors should always follow the advice of state and local public health officials.

General Guidance for Patrol Advisors

There are several actions recommended by the CDC that program sponsors can take to lower the risk of community spread.

Patrollers *should not* enforce public health measures like use of cloth face coverings, social distancing or hand hygiene while on duty, but Patrol Advisors should take care to educate Patrollers about:

- Why these public health measures are essential ;
- How they help reduce community spread of COVID-19; and
- When Patrollers practice these countermeasures while on duty, it sets an example for their classmates and shows respect for the health and safety of those in their community.

The CDC's recommended actions fall into four categories:

1. Promoting behaviors to reduce the spread

- Educate staff, Adult Crossing Guards, Patrols, students, and their families about when to stay home if they or someone in their household is showing symptoms of COVID-19.
- Reinforce healthy hygiene practices, like frequent hand washing and [covering coughs or sneezes](#).

- Patrol Advisors should ensure the Patrol has adequate supplies to support healthy hygiene behaviors (e.g., soap, hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol, paper towels, disinfectant wipes, and no-touch trash cans).
- [Cloth face coverings](#) may be challenging for students to wear all day, but are encouraged by the CDC [to help keep children healthy during the COVID-19 outbreak](#).

2. Maintaining healthy environments

- Ensure that Patrol equipment is wiped down frequently using CDC-approved disinfectant, especially after each shift. Consider engaging the Patrollers to help with this routine as part of their regular duties.
- Schools may consider offering each Patroller their equipment (belt, badge, poncho, and flag) to help minimize contact. Check with your local AAA Club regarding Patrol supplies.
- Schools may consider shifting Patrol meetings to outdoors and minimize the sharing of high-touch materials like electronic devices.
- Patrol Advisors could opt to individually label containers or cubbies for each member of the Patrol to limit contact.
- All reasonable consideration should be made to create social distancing on school buses and near vehicles, including the placement of Bus Patrols relative to other students.
- Physical indicators like tape on the floor or chalk on sidewalks can help Patrols distance themselves from others.

3. Maintain healthy operations

- Limit group size when assembling Patrols. Consider staggering shifts throughout the school week, and during arrivals and dismissals where Patrols assist.
- Pursue virtual training over face-to-face training. To help, schools can access this online [training tool](#), developed by the Auto Club Group and the Minnesota Safe Routes to School.
- Consider who will be the adult Patrol Advisor on-call, should the Advisor become ill.

4. Preparing for when someone gets sick

- Ensure Patrollers and their families know they should not come to school if sick, and have a back-up plan for Patrol posts if someone is out.
- Immediately notify school officials if someone becomes sick with COVID-19 symptoms, tests positive for COVID-19, or is exposed to someone with COVID-19.

Considerations Based on Where Patrollers are Posted

Crosswalk Patrollers

- Ensure Patrollers place backpacks and other belongings in designated areas at the school before heading to posts.
- If your school requires the use of cloth face coverings, Patrollers should consider them a part of their Patrol uniform. Check with your local AAA club about ordering [Safety Patrol branded masks](#).
- If your Patrol wears face coverings, adapt your communication protocols to ensure effective communication when someone's face is covered (i.e., use of whistles, hand signals, signs, etc.)

- Consider moving Patrols from traditional crosswalk post near the school grounds and move the Patrol post closer to monitor only the areas immediately near the school, including the front of the school, drop-off zones, and inside hallways.
- At their post, Patrollers stand at least one foot back from the curb in a comfortable position, and at least six feet away from other students.
- Patrollers can use the holding position when students arrive at their post and set tape or another marker six feet away to encourage safe social distancing. Adult leadership at the school should enforce that other students stand a minimum of six feet apart from the Patroller while they are in the holding position.

Valet Service in Drop-Off Zones

- Ensure social distancing is possible for Patrollers at drop-off zones. To maintain a safe distance between cars and other students, Patrollers should be evenly spaced at least a car's length apart. Schools should consider spacing vehicles even farther apart and marking safe distances with cones and tape.
- Patrollers should observe students enter and exit the vehicle, but not assist. Instead, the Patroller can stand six feet from the vehicle and observe the student exiting the vehicle, then thank the driver by giving a hand signal or verbal command to indicate he or she is clear of the vehicle. The vehicles would then be waved through the exit by an adult.
- The Advisor or supervising adult will courteously address drivers who park their cars in the drop-off lanes and attempt to exit their vehicles; they will also courteously address any social distancing issues.

School Bus Patrols

The objective of a traditional School Bus Patrol is to assist in transporting students to and from school safely. Still, the future of bus transportation will look drastically different when schools return.

- To further support the program, there must be an educational effort emphasizing proper conduct for entering, riding, and exiting the bus.
- Patrol Advisors are encouraged to ensure that Patrols have access to small, personal hand sanitizers for individual use throughout the day. All bus occupants (students and drivers) should be encouraged to utilize hand sanitizer upon entry to the school bus and again upon exiting the vehicle. Additional safety guidelines on school bus safety are available from [CDC](#) and [The National Association for Pupil Transportation](#).

Walking School Bus

- When schools resume, many students may opt to walk or bike. Walking Schools Bus Patrols (and the adult supervisor of the caravan) should maintain a safe distance of at least six feet between individuals.

Flag Duty

- Schools may wish to suspend flag duty for Patrols since it typically takes more than one Safety Patroller to properly lower and fold the flag. This task would be challenging while maintaining social distancing.

Guidance for Conduct of Patrol Meetings

- Meetings should take place once a month as scheduled by the Advisor at the beginning of each school year. Where feasible, meetings should be virtual or held outdoors if conducted in-person.

- Consider asking other safety stakeholders like the principal, police, adult crossing guards, bus drivers and volunteers to tape short video vignettes with safety lessons or words of encouragement that can be shared with the Patrol at these meetings.
- Officers should plan an agenda focused on both old and new Patrol business, including regular updates about COVID-19. Recall that meetings are conducted and follow a set agenda based on parliamentary procedure, which is a set of widely accepted rules that give meetings structure and order.

Overriding Guiding Principle to Keep in Mind

The more people a student or staff member interacts with, and the longer that interaction, the higher the risk of COVID-19 spread. Try to limit face-to-face exposure with Patrollers, and between Patrollers and their classmates when practical.

Tips for Talking to Patrols

- **Remain calm.** Remember that children will react to both what you say and how you say it. They will pick up cues from the conversations you have with them and with others.
- **Reassure children** that they are safe. Let them know it is okay if they feel upset. Share with them how you deal with your stress so that they can learn how to cope from you.
- **Make yourself available to listen and to talk.** Let children know they can come to you when they have questions.
- **Avoid language that might blame others** and [lead to stigma](#).
- **Provide information that is truthful and appropriate** for the age and developmental level of the child. Talk to children about how some stories on COVID-19 on the Internet and social media may be based on rumors and inaccurate information. Children may misinterpret what they hear and can be frightened about something they do not understand.
- **Teach children everyday actions** to reduce the spread of germs. Remind children to wash their hands frequently and stay away from people who are coughing or sneezing or sick. Also, remind them to cough or sneeze into a tissue or their elbow, then throw the tissue into the trash.
- **If school is open, discuss any new actions that may be taken** at school to help [protect children and school staff](#).

Remember, dedicated adult supervision, ongoing communication and regular inspections help protect Patrollers.

