



Dear Families, Children learn better in safe environments.

That is a lesson we learned again over the past few years as COVID-19 ripped through our communities and forced school closures. It is why educators strive to provide in-person learning.

Sickness is a significant educational barrier, and those coping with transmissible illness threaten the safe learning environment's integrity by spreading disease to the students and teachers around them. Though COVID-19 mitigations have subsided, we need your help protecting our safe learning environments for the sake of our students and their support system beyond school walls.

We are providing you today with a checklist of ways you can help us maintain a safe learning environment and teach our children the value of mindfulness and community health.

If your child is sick, please do not send them to school.

We want our students to share with each other in the learning experience – not their germs. Our teachers do a great job making sure absent students are not left behind. Some of the virtual learning techniques used during the COVID-19 pandemic have even helped these efforts.

Keep your child up-to-date with vaccines recommended by our public health system.

Vaccines promote safe learning environments. Think of how much school your student would miss if they contract an illness these vaccines are designed to prevent.

Support your child's health at school.

Our students have done more in the last few years to protect themselves and their classmates than so many generations of pupils before them. They ought to be commended and supported for their ongoing efforts.

Speaking of support systems: Should you or anyone you know need help reconnecting with basic human needs, such as groceries, healthcare access, safe shelter, applying for public service programs, or utility assistance, remember there is a network of Community Health Workers in our area ready to help. Services are free and come without residency requirements. Contact the public health department, or [visit **helpguidethrive.org**](https://www.helpguidethrive.org) to learn more about the Help. Guide. Thrive. Program.

With great thanks for your support,

Dr. Tracey Smith
Director of Community Health and Programs
Illinois Public Health Association

