



Ellis County - Back To School

On August 4th, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) released a Public Health Planning Guidance outline for all public schools in Texas. Under the TEA guideline, schools are required to notify parental and public figures of any changes a week prior to the change taking effect. To ensure a safe return for students, staff, and faculty, TEA asks that all students have the opportunity to engage in on-campus or virtual learning opportunities. [To read the full report by TEA and review your back to school options, click here.](#)

On July 28th, Attorney General Ken Paxton highlighted [Chapter 81.084](#) of the Health and Safety Code allowing the Local Health Authority to take action in preventing the spread of a communicable disease. This chapter requires a Local Health Authority to have at least a reasonable belief that infection exists on property before quarantining or imposing control measures on a property.

“On July 22nd, I met with our Local Health Authority Dr. Leigh Nordstrom, Emergency Management Coordinator Samantha Pickett, and local Superintendents to discuss the reopening plans for public schools in Ellis County,” said Ellis County Judge Todd Little. “After speaking with school officials, it was agreed that the minimum threshold of a 10% absentee rate due to COVID-19 or flu related illnesses would initiate a communicable disease prevention plan in accordance with chapter 81 of the Health and Safety Code on a campus-by-campus basis. When this threshold is met, the Local Health Authority will work with local school administrators to determine the closure of school campuses.

“Each and every one of us want to see our students return to school. As County Judge, I believe our school districts’, school boards, administrative leaders, teachers, and parents understand their unique community needs. Together, their partnership will steward the safe reopening of our schools.

“During this time the significance of maintaining a safe environment for our students, teachers, and staff will always remain our primary mission. I have requested the Office of Emergency Management to assist school administrators as they return back to school by providing resources; including personal protective equipment (PPE), readily available testing (through coordination with the State), and prevention planning guidance to aid our school districts in their COVID-19 mitigation efforts.

“I have seen our community come together during these challenging times, and I have confidence in the people of Ellis County to continue to uphold the safety, security, and the well-being of every member of this great county while offering excellent educational opportunities for our students.”

###