**Sample Provider Letter to School**

### Priorities for a Safe Return to School for Children with Complex Health Needs

XXX is a child with complex health needs managed in the XXX clinic. We suggest that XXX’s school implement the following expert consensus priorities to facilitate a safe and health-promoting school environment.

It is important to note that XXX is at risk of a severe or complicated case of COVID-19 due to their underlying health condition, including xxx [relevant information here]. We and XXX’s parent(s)/guardian(s) are in agreement that if XXX is in a school environment that prioritizes the considerations described below, the benefits of in person school attendance outweigh the risks. In addition, XXX should not attend school if they have any signs or symptoms of COVID-19 or [*include additional relevant information here*]. Their parent(s)/guardian(s) should be alerted as soon as possible if there are any illness outbreaks in the school so that they can reassess the risk/benefit balance of in person school attendance for XXX.

* Encourage all school staff who work in close proximity with children with complex health needs to be vaccinated against COVID-19 and other diseases including influenza.
* Encourage staff to wear a well-fitting mask based on current public health guidelines and CDC recommendations in school and transit.
* Consider masking to protect children with complex health needs from other respiratory illnesses, especially when students or staff are exhibiting symptoms.
* Ensure a respiratory protection plan is in place for school staff that includes N95 mask fit testing or availability of Powered Air Purifying Respirator for those performing high-risk care, such as aerosol-generating procedures.
* Educate school staff and families about the increased health risks of contracting COVID-19 and other viruses for children with complex health needs.
* Discuss COVID-19 and other outbreak mitigation strategies for children with complex health needs in Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings.
	+ Account for COVID-19 safety and mental and behavioral health adjustments with in-person school and virtual attendance.
	+ Contingency plans should include a clear description of the amount, frequency, duration and location as well as when contingency plan services will be in effect for each contingency plan service.  Contingency plans should be documented in the program summary of the IEP.
* Ensure that each child with complex health needs has their own medical equipment or single use disposable equipment at school.
* Have at least one medical staff available to address acute COVID-19 symptoms or questions.
* Provide families of children with complex health needs with the opportunity to change between in-person and virtual or homebound school based on illness or COVID-19 spread.
	+ These decisions should prioritize in-person instruction options while taking into account student safety and families’ needs.
	+ Work proactively with families to set decision-making criteria for when and under what circumstances IEP contingency plans will be necessary to meet children’s unique individualized education program needs of the IEP.

In addition to the considerations above, we recommend that schools should also follow COVID-19 mitigation strategies outlined by the Centers for Disease Control and American Academy of Pediatrics.