



August 21, 2020

Dr. Clayton Chau  
Orange County Health Care Agency

Dear Dr. Chau,

I am writing to secure a re-opening waiver for In STEPPS Academy, a private nonprofit school for students with Autism and similar learning needs in Irvine. In STEPPS Academy currently serves students in 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

In STEPPS Academy's number one priority is to keep our staff and the families we serve, healthy and safe. As part of In STEPPS Academy's initiative in reducing the risk of contracting and spreading Covid-19, we have implemented strict drop/off and pick up procedures, cleaning and disinfecting, and PPE policies and standards. All policies and procedures apply to all students and staff.

Like so many, our team and students have done their best to adapt to distance learning. However, with our student's unique learning differences, this transition has been challenging. We hope that our small class sizes and attention to all available precautions will allow us to resume the in-person model that is so necessary for our student's growth and progress. In addition to keeping our students and staff safe, we want to ensure that we appropriately follow all county guidelines and policies.

Our Reopen Plan, along with the waiver application and other important resources are available on our website: <https://www.insteppsacademy.org/covid-19/>

Please see below for the updated and completed waiver. We feel that we have met all of the guidelines outlined in the waiver process and are requesting approval to open our school to our students on our original requested start date of Wednesday, September 1, 2020.

I thank you for this opportunity to show you all that we have accomplished to keep our students safe and on-campus, ready to learn and reach their full potential.

Sincerely,

Diane Gonzalez M.A., BCBA

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Diane Gonzalez", with "M.A. BCBA" written in smaller letters to the right.

In STEPPS Academy Director

18008 Skypark Circle, Suite 110, Irvine, CA 92614. Phone: 949-474-1493. Fax: 949-726-8324

[www.instepps.com](http://www.instepps.com)



**Waiver Application Form**

Please submit one application for each local educational agency or equivalent. If applying on behalf of a school district, please submit one application for elementary schools in the district that are seeking to reopen for in-person instruction. If applying for an independent, private, faith-based, or charter school, please submit an application for each school.

**Background Information**

Name of Applicant (Local Educational Agency or Equivalent): In STEPPS Academy

Name of District/School: In STEPPS Academy

If this is a School District Consolidated Application Yes:  No:

Traditional Public School

School Type:  Charter School

Private, Independent, or Faith-Based School

Number of schools: 1

Enrollment: 6

Superintendent (or equivalent) Name: Diane Gonzalez M.A. BCBA

Address: 18008 Skypark Circle  
Suite 110  
Irvine, CA 92614

Number of students and number of classes per grade proposed to be reopened:

TK	K	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6 <sup>th</sup>
			3/1	3/1			

Date of Proposed Reopening: September 1, 2020

Name of Person Completing Application: Diane Gonzalez

Phone Number: 949-447-0820

Email: dianeg@insteppsacademy.com

Signature: *Diane Gonzalez M.A. BCBA*

Date: August 20, 2020



## I. Consultation

Please confirm consultation with the following groups:

Labor Organization

Name of Organization(s) and Date(s) Consulted:

The In STEPPS Academy Director has met regularly with school staff every Thursday at 3:00 p.m. since the initial school closures on 3/13/2020 where ongoing discussion and collaboration has taken place. In STEPPS Academy, teachers have played an integral part in the preparation and planning of the schools reopen, confirming their agreeance with school plans, in writing on 8/7/2020.

Parent and Community Organizations

Name of Organization(s) and Date(s) Consulted:

The In STEPPS Academy Director the reopening of school with each family individually in June 2020 and August of 2020 via phone calls and/or email. The In STEPPS Academy Board met on 7/20 and 8/6 to discuss the reopening plans. Families confirmed agreeance with posted reopen plans between 8/5-8/10. Families who have chosen not to return were offered Livestream learning and/or homeschool options.

If no labor organization represents staff at the school, please describe the process for consultation with school staff:

In STEPPS Academy has communicated all plans and updated policies with families and since the initial school closures in March 2020. The In STEPPS Academy, Human Resources department, has been and will continue to be available for all employees at all times to support additional concerns not discussed in regular team meetings

## II. Elementary School Reopening Plans

Please confirm that elementary school reopening plan(s) addressing the following, consistent with guidance from the California Department of Public Health and the local health department, have been published on the website of the local educational agency (or equivalent):

**Cleaning and Disinfection:** How shared surfaces will be regularly cleaned and disinfected and how use of shared items will be minimized.

**Cohorting:** How students will be kept in small, stable, groups with fixed membership that stay together for all activities (e.g., instruction, lunch, recess) and minimize/avoid contact with other groups or individuals who are not part of the cohort.

**Entrance, Egress, and Movement Within the School:** How movement of students, staff, and parents will be managed to avoid close contact and/or mixing of cohorts.



- Face Coverings and Other Essential Protective Gear:** How CDPH's face covering requirements will be satisfied and enforced.
- Health Screenings for Students and Staff:** How students and staff will be screened for symptoms of COVID-19 and how ill students or staff will be separated from others and sent home immediately.
- Healthy Hygiene Practices:** The availability of handwashing stations and hand sanitizer, and how their use will be promoted and incorporated into routines.
- Identification and Tracing of Contacts:** Actions that staff will take when there is a confirmed case. Confirm that the school(s) have designated staff persons to support contact tracing, such as creation and submission of lists of exposed students and staff to the local health department and notification of exposed persons. Each school must designate a person for the local health department to contact about COVID-19.
- Physical Distancing:** How space and routines will be arranged to allow for physical distancing of students and staff.
- Staff Training and Family Education:** How staff will be trained and families will be educated on the application and enforcement of the plan.
- Testing of Students and Staff:** How school officials will ensure that students and staff who have symptoms of COVID-19 or have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 will be rapidly tested and what instructions they will be given while waiting for test results. Describe how staff will be tested periodically to detect asymptomatic infections.
- Triggers for Switching to Distance Learning:** The criteria the superintendent will use to determine when to physically close the school and prohibit in-person instruction.
- Communication Plans:** How the superintendent will communicate with students, staff, and parents about cases and exposures at the school, consistent with privacy requirements such as FERPA and HIPAA.
- School Website URL** where reopening plan and waiver are posted.

<https://www.insteppsacademy.org/covid-19/>



**Additional Resources:**

CDPH and Cal/OSHA Guidance for Schools and School-Based Programs

<https://files.covid19.ca.gov/pdf/guidance-schools.pdf>

California Department of Education Stronger Together: A Guidebook for the Safe Reopening of California's Public Schools

<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/he/hn/strongertogether.asp>

CDPH COVID-19 and Reopening In-Person Learning Framework for K-12 Schools in California, 2020-2021 School Year

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/CDPH%20Document%20Library/COVID-19/Schools%20Reopening%20Recommendations.pdf>

For Internal Use Only:

Date Received

Health Officer Review

Determination Date