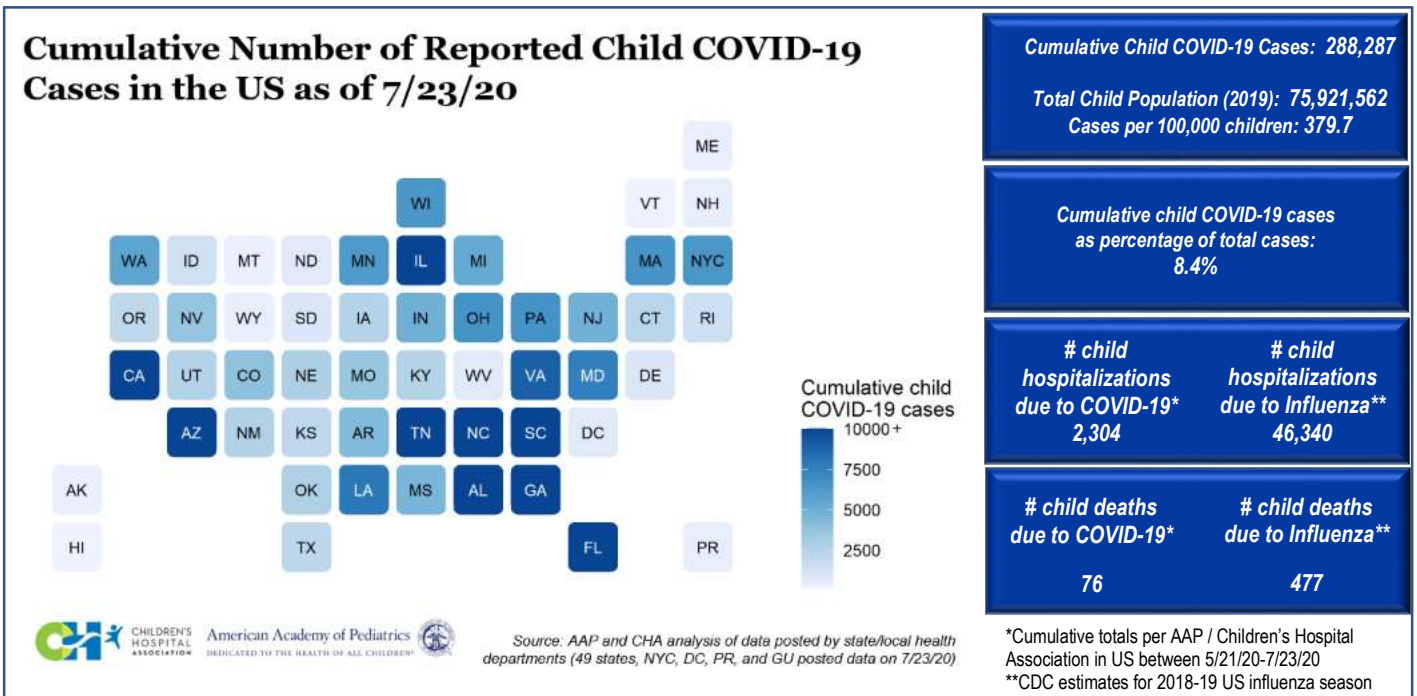




## BACK TO SCHOOL?

Whether or not schools will reopen for in person learning during the 2020-2021 school year has been making headlines across the US. Parents, employers and teachers are all trying to plan for every scenario to keep children and staff safe and adding to the complexity from an employer standpoint is the variation in planning by different school districts. In dissecting the 2019 working or looking for work population, 72% of women and 93% of men had minor children, making the back to school conversation a very high priority for employers. With countries across Europe and Asia managing to safely re-open schools without COVID-19 outbreaks, it creates hope that the same can be done in the US. When Finland reopened schools in May, without significant social distancing measures, they did not see a significant spike in COVID-19 transmission for students under 12 years of age. Sweden never closed their school doors and found that staff members at day cares and primary schools were no more likely to contract the virus than other professions.

On July 23, the CDC stated that “Schools are an important part of the infrastructure of communities, as they provide safe, supportive learning environments for students, employ teachers and other staff, and enable parents, guardians, and caregivers to work. Schools also provide critical services that help to mitigate health disparities, such as school meal programs, and social, physical, behavioral, and mental health services. School closure disrupts the delivery of these critical services to children and families, and places additional economic and psychological stress on families, which can increase the risk for family conflict and violence”. The American Academy of Pediatrics also supports resuming in-person learning with appropriate safety measures in place (disinfection processes, smaller classes, masks for older students and teachers) citing concerns of students falling behind from virtual learning and the essential in person learning processes, especially for students with any type of disability.



**Employer Considerations:** In person or virtual learning will vary across school districts, at least to start the 2020-2021 school year. Many larger school districts (Milwaukee and Madison Public Schools) have decided to start with virtual learning and transition to in person as the year progresses. As school districts continue to develop their teaching plans, employers will need to maintain flexibility and help employees find creative ways to perform job functions and be supportive of virtual learning for their children.

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