

PITTSBURGH CATHOLIC SCHOOLS



Health and Safety Plan 2021-2022

Our commitment to our families is to offer an excellent educational experience deeply rooted in the faith, love and charity of the Catholic Church. Our schools exist for the purpose of promoting a Catholic way of life based on Gospel values and providing our students with a faith experience that will nurture a love for Jesus Christ that will fill their hearts for a lifetime..

As we return to school for the 2021-22 school year, we do so with great faith and hope that this will be a very healthy, happy school year for our students. We faced many challenges last year and our school community worked together to keep in-person instruction available all year with minimal interruptions. This required flexibility, patience, and the need to monitor and adjust protocols based on recommendations from health agencies. While many schools in our area are discussing how to make up for learning loss, we saw growth in students' achievement. Our schools did amazing work in very challenging times!

We are facing similar challenges this school year which require adjustments to our health and safety plan. We know that the most effective education is in-person. For this reason we place our focus on providing health and safety protocols that reduce potential exposures and reduce the number of students having to quarantine.

In compliance with the latest health and safety guidance from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Pennsylvania Departments of Education and Health (PDE and PA DOH), Allegheny County Department of Health, American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), and Children's Hospital of Pennsylvania (CHOP) Policy Lab, the accompanying framework will serve as the template for the 2021-2022 school year. Take the time to read through the protocols. Of critical importance is the knowledge we all have from living through this pandemic that the environment can change quickly. We will be responsive to those changes as the situation improves or worsens in our communities. This includes every layer of mitigation and may require decisions to be adjusted on short notice.

We had all hoped for a "normal" return to school this year, but we do our very best to follow proper safety protocols. Your collaboration and patience is key in providing our students with proper school days in class with their friends.

General Principles for the Building and Operations

General Activities

- It is our intent that visitors will be allowed back into the building. They will need to follow all health and safety requirements in place at the time of their visit.
- High touch surfaces shall be cleaned and sanitized frequently.
- Hand sanitizers will be available in the hallways, near entrances and in strategic areas.
- Sharing supplies will be limited, and when materials must be shared, cleaning in between use is recommended.
- Students and teachers will use individual technology devices when possible.
- When possible, special teachers and departmental teachers will go into the students' classrooms. If students transition to other classroom spaces, assigned seats will be maintained for contact tracing purposes.
- Students will be able to sing during music class if masked, 3 feet apart, and all facing the same direction.
- To increase ventilation, windows will be opened if and when possible.
- Face masks requirements will be determined in accordance with the county transmission metrics and the guidance from various sources, which may include, but not limited to the CDC, PA DOH, PDE, and Allegheny County DOH. This policy is subject to change at any time and will be communicated when adjustments are made.
 - As of August, 2021, **we have a universal mask requirement indoors** based upon the aforementioned sources and the information below.
 - The levels of transmission for a county are listed as Low, Moderate, Substantial and High and found at <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view>
 - When counties are in moderate, substantial or higher, all individuals, regardless of vaccination status, wear masks indoors.
 - When a county is in a low community transmission rate for at least 2 weeks, masking may return to optional. Anyone that is not vaccinated at that time, will be encouraged to continue to mask indoors.

- Face masks must be worn properly (covering nose and mouth and fitted snugly against the sides of the individual's face).
- When masks are required, mask breaks will occur while implementing six foot social distancing during the day and will not have to be worn when eating or drinking.
- At this time, masks are optional outdoors. Masks should be worn in crowded outdoor settings when there is sustained close contact.
- Use of a mask for students who ride a bus will be dictated by the applicable local school district's policy. Currently, the PA Department of Health requires masks on public transit.
- Individuals not in compliance with our universal mask requirement will not be permitted in School buildings and may jeopardize enrollment.
- Exemptions for the face mask requirement will be granted to those who provide documentation from the individual's treating physician (PCP or Specialist) indicating the individual is under the physician's care and cannot wear a face mask due to a specified medical condition.
 - Please use the enclosed Medical Exemption Form.

Sharing the Faith

- School Masses will follow school protocols.
- Principals will work with pastors and/or chaplains to develop a Mass schedule that is either in person or live-streamed.
- Attendance of parents and general community at the school liturgies will follow school guidelines. If the Mass is live-streamed, parents and families can also attend virtually.

Entering the Building

All who enter the building should adhere to the following:

- Wear a mask properly (covering nose and mouth and fitted snugly against the sides of the individual's face) in accordance with current school policies.
- Exercise good hygiene and proper handwashing, including sanitizing hands upon entering the building
- Implement physical distancing measures
- Support proper cleaning and disinfection
- **Screen Health Daily** at home **before** coming to the school premises.

- **Prior to entering School premises, all members of the school community are asked to ask themselves the questions below. Should the answer to any of the questions on any given day be “Yes,” you are expected not to come on or send your child to School premises.**
 - Have I or has my child had a fever as defined by the CDC during the past 24 hours?
 - Have I or has my child had a new or unexpected cough during the past 7 days?
 - Have I or has my child been around anyone exhibiting these symptoms within the past 14 days?
 - Do I or my child live with anyone who has been sick, has exhibited symptoms of COVID-19, or is currently under quarantine for exposure to COVID-19?
 - Have I or has my traveled domestically or internationally, necessitating quarantine consistent with CDC guidelines?
 - Have I or has my child disregarded CDC guidelines and failed to limit his/her exposure to COVID-19?

Lunch

- Students should wash/sanitize hands before lunch.
- Students should stay with their class as they eat lunch, if possible.
- Students should remain physically distant during lunch, ideally 6 feet apart.
- The table and desks should be wiped down before and after each meal.
- Meals will not be shared.
- Meals and utensils should be served directly to the student and prepackaged if possible.
- Students should wash/sanitize hands after lunch.

Recess

- Students will go to recess using the procedures established in school operations regarding movement within the building.
- Students will wash/sanitize their hands before going to recess and before returning to Class.
- Students will not need to wear masks for outdoor recess.

- Games and activities used during recess will be pre-approved locally by the principal and school health and safety committee to limit the spread of infectious disease.
- Practice physical distancing while walking to recess.

Traveling Within the Building

- As people travel about the building, masks will be worn if required.
- Directionality should be considered in each school.
- A schedule should be developed that takes into consideration the movement of students around the building.
- Increased cleaning of all commonly touched items, like railings and door knobs, should be cleaned throughout the day.

Physical Education

- Weather permitting, PE class should be held in outside space. Weather non-permitting, PE in the Gymnasium. Masks must be worn before and after, but **may be removed or pulled down during active participation indoors.**
- Students should wash/sanitize hands before and after activity.
- It is preferred that students carry personal water bottles for hydration before, during and after activity.
- Class equipment be sanitized frequently if possible (arrange class times to allow for a buffer between classes to allow the teacher to facilitate moving, washing and sanitizing).
- Limit shared items or keep the same groupings throughout lessons.

Isolation

- Anyone who presents with symptoms or suspected symptoms of COVID-19 will be isolated pending the arrival of a parent/guardian to pick up the child.
 - **Parents/Guardians understand and agree that, in the event their child develops symptoms or suspected symptoms of COVID-19 or other illness, or if otherwise requested by the School, their child will be isolated, Parents/Guardians will be contacted by School, and Parents/Guardians will make immediate preparations to have their child picked up from School.**

- A supervised isolation area will be established with individuals physically distanced and masked therein.
 - This may be the nurse's office.
- The room will be disinfected after each use.
- The room monitor will have supplies including:
 - Additional PPE: Mask, Gown, Disposable Gloves, Face Shield or Goggles etc.
 - Disposable paper towels
 - Tissues
 - Waste container with plastic liner
 - Soap and Water or Hand Sanitizer
 - Hard-surface disinfectant

Classroom Operations

Classroom Set-up

- Desks should face the same direction whenever possible. There may be times when this is not possible, but the students will maintain the 3 - 6 feet of distancing to the maximum extent possible.
- Desks will be placed a minimum of 3 feet apart.
- The first row of desks should be at least 6 feet from the teacher when he/she is teaching.

Materials within the Classroom

- Classrooms should set up areas where students can store personal items that keep them isolated from use by others.
- Sharing supplies and materials will be limited, and when materials must be shared, cleaning in between uses is recommended.
- Establish procedures to wipe down surfaces and materials regularly (before and after every use is recommended).
- Remind students to wash/sanitize their hands after using a shared item.
- If students travel to an alternative room, an area and place should be established for the traveling student to store items away from those being used by others.

Virtual Learning

- While we realize that in-person instruction is the most conducive environment for student learning and well-being, the need for virtual learning may become necessary due to school required COVID-19 quarantine. These are the only instances whereby virtual learning will be utilized. The information provided below is a guide. Virtual learning experiences are determined locally.
 - **Such distance learning shall be consistent with School's mission, quality, and support, and is subject to the terms of the Student-Parent Handbook and School and Diocesan Policies.**
 - **Students and their Parents/Guardians understand and agree that in-person classes may be recorded and/or live streamed to facilitate distance learning. The teacher shall have the sole ability to make such recordings, which shall be used strictly for educational purposes by the School.**
 - **Students and their Parents/Guardians further understand and agree that any distance learning offered online by the School through educational platforms such as Google Classroom and Zoom platforms for online synchronous video instruction involve web-based activities which entail known and unanticipated risks that cannot be eliminated. As a result, School recommends the use of appropriate Internet filtering software.**
- Provide the use of a Google Classroom and Google Meet to centralize materials, lessons, instruction, assessments, feedback and communications. (Platforms may differ by school as it is locally determined.)
- Virtual instruction will take place as teachers:
 - Provide a continued focus on our Catholic identity throughout instruction and in all content areas.
 - Provide asynchronous and synchronous direct instruction by teacher.
 - Incorporate recorded instructional follow up videos.
 - Provide materials that are age- and grade-appropriate.
 - Use textbook online components with timely follow-up.
 - Use assessments with timely feedback.
 - Goal is mastery of concepts within the curriculum.
 - Use small group and large group instruction to meet the needs of students.
 - Have regular communication with parents/guardians.

Health Protocol

Guidance for Dealing with COVID Cases

Schools will make efforts to monitor for COVID-19 related symptoms of students, faculty and staff. If a community, or specifically school, has cases of COVID-19, local health officials will

be contacted to help identify those individuals and follow up on next steps. Below you will find some specific guidance related to situations involving the school, community and COVID-19. **All guidelines are subject to change due to updated public health guidance.**

Vaccinations:

- It is highly recommended that everyone who is eligible get vaccinated, and those who are not yet eligible, get vaccinated when it is their turn. We will inform you of any changes in public health guidance as they arise.

Isolation and Quarantine

- **Students and their Parents/Guardians understand and agree that anyone who contracts COVID-19 or becomes exposed to someone with COVID-19 will need to be isolated or quarantined pursuant to CDC guidelines before returning to School premises.**

If a student, faculty or staff member has a suspected case of COVID-19 or is demonstrating symptoms, the following steps will be taken:

1. Immediately separate staff and students with COVID-19 symptoms (such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath) at school. Individuals who are sick should go home or to a healthcare facility depending on how severe their symptoms are. CDC guidance for caring for oneself and others who are sick should be followed.
2. Provide an isolation room.
3. Call for home transportation, if necessary.
4. Direct to return in accordance with one of the following scenarios
 - a. **No COVID Test:**
 - i. Alternate Diagnosis:
 1. Documentation of an alternative diagnosis from individual's health care provider; and
 2. Fever free for 24 hours without fever reducing medication; and
 3. Symptoms have improved.
 - ii. No Alternate Diagnosis:
 1. 10 days out from start of symptoms; and
 2. Fever free for 24 hours without fever reducing medication; and
 3. Symptoms have improved.
 - b. **COVID Test:**
 - i. Negative COVID test:
 1. Documentation of a negative COVID test from the individual's healthcare provider; and
 2. Fever free for 24 hours without fever reducing medication; and
 3. Symptoms have improved.
 - ii. Positive COVID test:
 1. 10 days out from the start of symptoms; and
 2. Fever free for 24 hours without fever reducing medication, and
 3. Symptoms have improved.

If a staff member or volunteer has a confirmed case of COVID-19:

1. Notify the local health officials to ask for guidance.
2. Send the staff member or volunteer home while local health officials determine next steps.
3. Quarantine close contacts, related to the suspected case of COVID-19, according to health official guidance as set forth herein..
 - a. A person is a close contact if they were within 6 feet of an infected person for 15 consecutive minutes or more in an indoor setting with or without a mask.
 - b. EXCEPTION: In the K–12 indoor classroom setting, the close contact definition excludes students who were within 3 to 6 feet of an infected student if both the infected student and the exposed student(s) correctly and consistently wore well-fitting masks the entire time.
4. Communicate to staff and families that there was a confirmed case – without using a name or identifying information of the person(s) involved.
5. Clean and sanitize the areas that may have been infected by the identified case of COVID-19.
6. Evaluate if any other cases related to the case were identified and decide to extend or end the quarantines of close contacts.
7. The COVID-positive staff/volunteer can return after the following conditions have been met:
 - 10 days out from the start of symptoms; and
 - Fever free for 24 hours without fever reducing medication, and
 - Symptoms have improved.

If a student has a confirmed case of COVID-19, the following steps will be taken:

- Notify local health officials to ask for guidance.
- Send the student(s) home while health officials determine next steps.
- Quarantine close contacts related to the suspected case of COVID-19 using health official guidance for this.
- Communicate to staff and families that there was a confirmed case. Name or identifying information of the student with COVID-19 is not permitted.
- Clean and sanitize areas related to the identified case of COVID-19.
- Evaluate if any other cases related to the case were identified and decide to extend or end the quarantine of close contacts.
- The COVID-positive student can return after the following conditions have been met:
 - 10 days out from the start of symptoms; and
 - Fever free for 24 hours without fever reducing medication, and
 - symptoms have improved.

If a student/staff member has an exposure to a confirmed case of COVID-19, she/ he can return after the following conditions have been met:

1. Quarantine Duration if experiencing **No Symptoms:**

- a. Quarantine 10 days from date of exposure; and
Return on day 11, wearing a mask on days 11-14.
- b. **EXCEPTIONS:**
 - i. **COVID Test:** Quarantine can end after 7 days if the person does not develop symptoms and tests negative 5 days after exposure or later.
 - ii. **Masked, Socially Distanced Unvaccinated Students:**
 1. Unvaccinated students who were 3-6 feet from an infected person and both masked consistently and correctly do not need to take any action so long as they do not experience symptoms.
 - iii. **Vaccinated:**
 1. **Staff:** Close contacts who are fully vaccinated do not need to quarantine unless they have symptoms; however, they should get tested 2-5 days after exposure and wear a mask indoors in public for 14 days following exposure or until their test result is negative.
 2. **Students:**
 - a. Vaccinated students who were **3-6 feet** from an infected person and both **masked** do not need to take any action unless they develop symptoms.
 - b. Vaccinated students who were **closer** or either was **unmasked** need to wear a mask and get tested 2-5 days after exposure.
 - iv. **Previously confirmed COVID:** Close contacts who were diagnosed with COVID within the past three months of exposure, recovered, and do not develop symptoms do not need to quarantine; however, they should get tested 2-5 days after exposure and wear a mask indoors in public for 14 days following exposure or until their test result is negative.
 - v. **Exposure to COVID by member of household:**
 1. If close contact is vaccinated, there is no need to quarantine.
 2. If close contact is not vaccinated:
 - a. Quarantine through isolation period of household member; and
 - b. Quarantine 10 days from end of isolation period; and
 - c. Return on day 11, wearing a mask on days 11-14.
2. Quarantine Duration if experiencing **Symptoms:**
 - a. If a Close Contact develops symptoms, see above protocol for individuals with a suspected case of COVID-19 or is demonstrating symptoms.

Before Care/Aftercare (if applicable)

- Physical distancing practices and all required protocols at the time are to be observed.

- Students are responsible for providing their own snack and beverage during their time in Aftercare. There will be no snack sharing.
- All employees should follow the same health checklist practices as school employees.
- All operational guidelines put into place in the school (e.g. movement through the building, recess, etc.) are to be practiced during sessions.
- Disinfect shared rooms before and after use.
- It is recommended that materials and toys used during these programs be cleaned and sanitized daily.
- Monitored hand washing and sanitizing will be done on a regular basis.
- Follow the recommendations for any suspected illness.

Afterschool Activities & Sports

- Each principal is asked to examine the after-school activities in the school.
- If there is a room available, where students may be physically distant, after school activities may continue. All rooms must be disinfected after use by the activity/club.
- If in compliance with the state guidelines for events and gatherings, in-person gatherings may occur.
- **Physical Education and Sports**
 - Masks may be removed or pulled down while participating in high intensity aerobic activities (active play situations), including during a physical education class in a well-ventilated location where a physical distance of six feet from all other individuals can be maintained
 - Masks may be removed or pulled down when a child/student is participating in a sports practice activity or event, whether indoors or outdoors.
 - Please also refer to guidance issued by the Diocesan Athletic Director.

Travel

If you are traveling, please inform your school principal. The guidance regarding travel changes frequently, and international travel may require quarantine and testing.

Request for Medical Exemption to Mask Requirements

If your child is unable to wear a face covering in school due to a medical or mental health condition or disability, you must provide to the school Principal/Nurse at your child's school building, this form signed and dated from your child's treating physician (pediatrician or specialist). This form must specify the medical or mental health condition or disability that precludes your child from wearing a face covering in school, as well as suggestions for alternative means for your child for preventing the spread of the virus.

A physician is defined as an M.D. for Doctor of Medicine or D.O. for Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine. Medical notes from alternative health providers, such as Chiropractors, etc., will not be accepted.

Additionally, the School will require students with a Medical Exemption to Mask Requirements to remain at least 6 feet apart from other individuals for social distancing while indoors in accordance with the Centers for Disease Control guidelines and local Health Department mandates.

A School reserves the right to not accept a Request for Medical Exemption to Mask Requirements.

A School may require that a child wear a face shield when social distancing is not possible.

The parent will need to submit this informational sheet signed, with the documentation from the physician when requesting a Medical Exemption to Mask Requirements.

Parent Signature _____

Date _____

SECTION A. To be completed by your child's parent/guardian.

Full Name of Child: _____

School: _____

Grade for 2021-2022 School Year: _____

I am requesting an exemption from the mask requirements due to my understanding that my child has a documented medical or mental health condition or disability that precludes the wearing of a face covering in school, and I am requesting an exemption from this requirement.

I understand that:

1. By not wearing a face covering in school, my child may be at increased risk of contracting or spreading COVID-19;
2. The school may consider appropriate alternative learning options for my child, including whether virtual learning is appropriate;
3. My child may be referred for an evaluation to determine if any disability prevents my child from wearing a face covering and whether and to what extent accommodations will be provided;
4. Submitting this form constitutes my permission for the School to communicate with my child's healthcare provider regarding this medical or mental health condition or disability; and
5. Submitting this form does not guarantee that my medical exemption request will be granted. The School must first review my request and provide notification if it is granted.

Parent/Guardian Name (Print)

Parent/Guardian Signature

SECTION B. To be completed by your child's healthcare provider.

Full Name of Healthcare Provider: _____

Office Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Full Name of Patient (the child): _____

Subject to the penalties of unsworn falsification to authorities, I hereby certify that it is my professional opinion, with a reasonable degree of professional certainty, that [check the box that applies]:

☐ My patient (the child) does NOT have any medical or mental health condition or disability that precludes the wearing of a face covering in school;

☐ My patient (the child) has a medical or mental health condition or disability that relates to his or her wearing a face covering in school, but he or she can tolerate wearing a face covering in school if accommodations are provided. The recommended accommodations are (specify):

☐ My patient (the child) has a medical or mental health condition or disability that precludes the wearing of a face covering in school.

If you checked either the second or third box, please identify the medical or mental health condition or disability and specify how that relates to your patient's (the child's) ability to wear a face covering in school:

If you checked either the second or third box, please specify any and all alternative means that may be used by your patient (the child), while your patient (the child) is not wearing a face covering in school, to protect your patient (the child) and others from, and to prevent the contraction and spread of, COVID-19 in school:

Physician Signature

Date