

# PreK-12 Health and Safety Guidance for the 2021-2022 School Year for Catholic Schools in the Archdiocese of Detroit.

## UPDATED 2/15/2022

This document shall serve as the health and safety guidance for all Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Detroit (AOD) for the 2021-2022 school year. This guidance is based upon our belief that all students deserve equal access to in-person learning and is guided by our increased understanding of COVID-19: its limited spread in our highly mitigated school settings, current national and local data and research, and increased vaccination rates. Preschool and Latchkey programs that operate in licensed facilities are required to adhere to LARA regulations. The guidance provided in this document may be updated at any time if revisions are made to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) guidance for schools. Note: PreK-12 schools may develop and adopt policies that are stricter than LARA, MDHHS, or AOD guidelines.

To support schools throughout the school year, the AOD will provide general parameters and guidance concerning quarantine and isolation activities for positive COVID-19 cases and close contacts, testing, and other health and safety related issues. Our primary goal is to ensure a safe and responsible approach to full in-person learning, while providing schools with the tools they need to navigate and appropriately prepare for the school year.

Schools are encouraged to communicate the health and safety policies and practices to their school communities early and often. The AOD will maintain open communication with the MDHHS regarding any changes in federal and state guidance, vaccine updates, and other critical information required to make informed decisions to prioritize the safety of students and staff in our schools.

Schools remain one of the safest places for students, teachers, and school staff with regard to mitigating COVID-19 exposure. Our goal is to give all students the opportunity for safe, in-person learning, five days a week. Catholic schools in the AOD are no longer required to provide a distance learning option for students/families. Each school should determine if/how services and educational programming will be provided if a student must remain home for short periods of time due to illness, isolation, or quarantine.

## Health Orders

- **Schools will follow all state and local Health Department Orders regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, including any mandates or mitigation strategies above and beyond the AOD guidance detailed below.**

## Vaccination

- Vaccination against COVID-19 is not required but strongly encouraged for employees and eligible students, as “an act of love of our neighbor and part of our moral responsibility for the common good.”<sup>1</sup>
- The CDC and MDHHS state that one way to protect the health of children is to ensure that all eligible populations in a household are fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

<sup>1</sup> *Moral considerations regarding the new COVID-19 vaccines*, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Dec. 14, 2020

## Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- The CDC recommends that all people wear masks indoors to reduce exposure to COVID-19, regardless of vaccination status.
- The Archdiocese recommends but does not require indoor masking for all students, faculty, staff, and visitors to schools, regardless of vaccination status. Schools in the Archdiocese will promote and encourage consistent and correct mask use.

- Individual schools may put in place additional safety policies, above and beyond AOD guidance, including requiring the use of masks for certain populations and/or in certain scenarios. Schools that implement universal use of masking policies must make exceptions for the following categories of people: children under the age of 2 years, people with disabilities who cannot wear masks, or who cannot safely wear masks because of disabilities as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act.

## Hygiene

- Schools should continue to utilize the CDC guidance for cleaning, disinfection, and hand hygiene
- Schools will promote proper handwashing and covering of coughs and sneezes
- Schools will improve ventilation by opening doors and windows, using child-safe fans, and making changes to HVAC or air filtration systems when possible.

## Spacing, Movement, and Access

- Schools should continue to utilize the CDC guidance for spacing. It is recommended that schools maintain at least three feet of physical distance between students.
- Students and staff may travel between classrooms.
- School visitors may enter the school building, but limits should still be considered and determined by each school. A log of all visitors is required. Logs should document the date, contact information, and arrival/departure times.

## Screening Students and Staff

- Parents/guardians should monitor their children for symptoms of infectious illness every day through home-based symptom screening. This approach relies on students and their caregivers to identify when the student might have symptoms of infectious illness.
- Faculty and staff members also should monitor their health for symptoms of infectious illness every day.
- Anyone who is sick or displaying symptoms of infectious illness should not attend school and seek medical care when necessary. Individuals should get tested if they are presenting symptoms of COVID-19 or are known to have been exposed to COVID-19.

## Testing Protocols

- At this time, no school-based testing protocols are recommended.

## Responding to Positive COVID-19 Cases and Close Contacts

- Schools will follow their local health department's guidance regarding positive COVID cases.
- Schools will communicate to parents/guardians and staff that they shall notify school administration immediately of any confirmed case of COVID-19. Families will be notified of the presence of any laboratory positive or clinically diagnosed cases of COVID-19 in the classroom and/or school to encourage closer observation for any symptoms at home.

## Gatherings and Extracurricular Activities

- It is recommended that three to six feet of distance is maintained between individuals during indoor dining.
- Non-liturgical group gatherings and extracurricular activities are allowed unless local health data changes and deems them unsafe.
- Field trips are allowed, with participants following all safety measures in place at the trip's destination, including social distancing and mask usage.
- Off-site and overnight retreats are allowed with AOD approval.
- Before/after school care programs must follow LARA guidelines and requirements.

## Athletics

- Currently, there are no COVID-19 related restrictions or requirements specifically for athletics. The CDC recommends that all people wear masks indoors to reduce exposure to COVID-19, regardless of vaccination status.
- Updated guidance from MHSAA, CHSL and CYO should be followed by all schools.

## Busing and Student Transportation

- The use of facial coverings is required by federal order on school buses and other forms of public transportation in the United States, regardless of vaccination status.
- There are no capacity restrictions for school transportation for the 2021-2022 school year.
- Bus windows should be opened to improve ventilation when it does not create a safety hazard.

## Travel - International or Domestic Out of State

- Vaccinated students and staff do not need to quarantine upon return but should monitor for symptoms for 14 days.
- Unvaccinated students and staff are to quarantine for five days post-travel. They may return to campus on day six. Students and staff should continue monitoring for symptoms of COVID-19 and wear a well-fitting mask once they return to campus on days 6-10. If the trip was school sponsored and all students and staff on the trip are from the same school, they can return without quarantine.

## Mental & Social-Emotional Health

- Schools will foster an environment of Christian charity and respect for others' decisions regarding vaccination status and use of masks.
- School personnel will continue to monitor the mental, social, academic, emotional, and spiritual well-being of all students and staff, providing intervention, assistance, and support when needed.

The members of the AOD Return to School Task Force are grateful for the diligent adherence to the safety requirements and recommendations by students, families, and school staff members that allowed for in-person learning to take place in our Catholic schools during the 2020-21 school year. We are looking forward to continuing our commitment to in-person learning with our students, which we firmly believe is the most effective means of walking together on our journey as missionary disciples of Jesus Christ.

*“For the Catholic school mutual respect means service to the Person of Christ. Cooperation is between brothers and sisters in Christ. A policy of working for the common good is undertaken seriously as working for the building up of the Kingdom of God.... each has his or her own part to play. Cooperation of all, given in the spirit of the Gospel, is by its very nature a witness not only to Christ as the corner-stone of the community, but also as the light Who shines far beyond it.”*

*(The Catholic School, para. 60-61)*