



• ARCHDIOCESE OF DETROIT •
CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

PreK-12 Health & Safety Guidance

for the 2021-2022 COVID-19
School Year for Catholic Schools
in the Archdiocese of Detroit



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.

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.”¹
- The expectations of length of quarantine differ for vaccinated vs. unvaccinated individuals. Therefore, an employee or student may be required to provide proof of their vaccination status to determine appropriate quarantine if they are in close contact with a positive case of COVID-19.
- 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.

¹ [*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.
- Likewise, 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 facial coverings 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 clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces at least once daily
- 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

- Outdoor learning experiences and dining are encouraged whenever possible.
- The use of physical barriers, such as plexiglass shields, is no longer recommended, per the CDC.
- Teachers should maintain seating charts with assigned student seats as much as possible to assist with contact tracing when necessary.
- It is recommended that schools maintain at least six feet of physical distance between students to help limit the need for quarantine in the event of a positive case within the classroom. If all students are masked, the recommended distance may be decreased to three feet.
- 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. All visitors are encouraged to wear masks.

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.
- Schools should post symptom identification signage at the entrance(s) of their building.

Testing Protocols

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

Responding to Positive COVID-19 Cases and Close Contacts

- Schools will follow all state and local Health Department Orders regarding the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Schools will continue to collaborate with their county Health Departments to establish contact tracing and to implement quarantines when deemed necessary by health officials.
- Schools will communicate to parents/guardians and staff that they shall notify school administration immediately of any possible 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 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 deem them unsafe.
- Field trips may resume, with participants following all safety measure in place at the trip's destination, including social distancing and mask use.
- Off-site and overnight retreats are allowed with AOD approval.
- Before/after school care programs must follow LARA guidelines and requirements.

Athletics

- At this time, there are no COVID-19 related restrictions or requirements for athletics.
- 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.
- It is recommended that household members sit together in the same seat when possible.
- It is recommended that schools continue to create distance between children on school buses.
- Bus personnel should continue to maintain seating charts with assigned student seats as much as possible to assist with case investigation and contact tracing when needed.
- Bus windows should be opened to improve ventilation when it does not create a safety hazard.

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)

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