



Go Make Disciples

ARCHDIOCESE OF OKLAHOMA CITY

COVID-19 Recommendations, Precautions and Protocols *for Catholic schools, religious education and youth activities*

Archdiocese of Oklahoma City

Effective August 1, 2021

Guiding Principles

1. **Flexibility:** A lesson learned in the past year is that COVID is unpredictable, and flexibility is key! With that in mind, all precautions and guidelines in this document are subject to change as conditions warrant.
2. **Subsidiarity:** In applying these guidelines, pastors, principals and their staffs are encouraged to adapt them to their unique circumstances and local conditions. The goal is to provide schools and parishes with a framework to create their own site-based continuity plan that outlines the re-entry to youth ministry and the school year with a focus on learning and safety as well as the ongoing health of students, youth, staff and families. Pastors, principals, classroom teachers and youth leaders are empowered to take the measures that work best for their parish/school/classroom.
3. **Charity:** Christ calls us to love one another. Loving neighbors is the lens through which all our actions must be viewed. To maintain a healthy environment, taking steps such as sanitizing hands, personal hygiene, air circulation, communication, contact tracing and distancing ought to be implemented. Parishes, schools and families are encouraged to continue to work together to create the best environment possible for each classroom, activity and local situation.

Immunization Requirements for Schools

- Vaccinations for COVID-19 are not required, but are strongly encouraged for all who qualify. Currently, adults and youth aged 12 and older are eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine. The vaccine soon may be available for younger children.
- For information on age requirements and where to receive a COVID-19 vaccine in Oklahoma, go online to oklahoma.gov/covid19.
- For other immunizations, please see the Catholic Schools Admissions Policy.

Precautions for Youth/Students

- Parishes and schools should develop a layered strategy that provides measures that best fit each location, activity, age and risk.

- Students/youth are not required to wear a mask in the classroom, at lunch, outside or at Mass.
- Students/youth who have not received a COVID-19 vaccine should consider wearing a mask in the classroom, especially where social distancing is not possible.
- Masks are strongly encouraged for those who are unvaccinated during hallway exchanges between classes, during extended periods of working in small close groups and during schoolwide assemblies where social distancing is not possible.
- Students/youth are required to have a mask available while at school or during youth activities at parishes.
- Distancing between students/youth of at least three feet is recommended, including a buffer around desks for teachers.
- Distancing of three feet is recommended in classrooms, religious education classes, youth groups, etc., if possible. Holding meetings/groups outside should be considered when or where possible.
- At the recommendation of infectious disease professionals, teachers should consider placing a vaccinated student between unvaccinated students as a buffer – without revealing vaccination status to students.
- As with any illness, parents should keep children home if they are ill or display symptoms of COVID-19, including a persistent cough, fever or chills, a sore throat, diarrhea, vomiting or loss of taste or smell. For more information on symptoms of COVID-19 and how to differentiate coronavirus from other ailments such as seasonal allergies, go online to [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html).
- If a student/youth displays symptoms of COVID-19 during the activity, class or school function, they must be separated from others and their parents notified. See quarantine guidelines below.
- Parents must notify the school (or parish for RE, confirmation, youth group) if their child becomes ill with COVID-19 or tests positive for COVID-19, and must follow the prescribed quarantine requirements below.
- Parents must notify the school (or parish for RE, confirmation, youth group) if someone in the student's household becomes ill or tests positive for COVID-19.
- All athletic sporting events must adhere to CGSAA guidelines provided by the archdiocese.
- Consider continuing those practices that helped to keep track of students for contact tracing purposes such as seating charts and cohorting. This will help keep the number of quarantines to a minimum.

- Other recommendations include providing lanyards for students/youth to keep masks with them, work with families who may need further precautions due to having vulnerable adults at home, and monitoring zip code specific transmission rates.

Precautions for Teachers, Catechists and Staff

- Staff members are not required to wear a mask.
- Staff members who have not received a COVID-19 vaccine are strongly encouraged to wear a mask or other face covering.
- Staff members who work in food service must wear masks while handling food.
- Vaccinations for COVID-19 are not required for staff but are strongly encouraged.
- Regular cleaning and sanitation of classrooms is recommended.
- Teachers should be encouraged to provide hand sanitizer, wipes or other means for students to sanitize their hands, especially prior to eating lunch, a snack or participating in a classroom party.
- Under the new COVID-19 guidance, OSHA is urging employers to take steps to protect unvaccinated or otherwise at-risk workers.
- Provide employees with paid leave for the COVID-19 vaccination.
- Institute workplace policies that require COVID-19-positive, unvaccinated workers who have had close contact with a COVID-19-positive individual, and all employees experiencing symptoms to stay home.
- Provide face coverings for unvaccinated and at-risk employees at no cost.
- Train all employees on the COVID-19 policies and procedures in the workplace.

Quarantine protocols

- Parishes and schools should develop and communicate a written isolation process for staff, students or youth who are ill.
- This process should include: 1) when an ill person should be kept home, 2) when an ill person will be sent home from school/parish, and 3) criteria for them to return to school/parish.
- Develop and communicate a written process for contact tracing and quarantine of exposed contacts to a person who is ill or tests positive for COVID-19.

- Exposed contacts who are fully vaccinated or tested positive for COVID-19 within the past 90 days are not required to quarantine unless they begin to show symptoms of COVID-19.
- Students or staff who are unvaccinated and have direct contact with someone with symptoms of COVID-19 or a positive test for COVID-19 – which means contact within six feet for more than 15 minutes – must quarantine for seven days. After five days, if the student or staff member tests negative using a PCR or antigen test, they can return.
- Notify your local county health department immediately if two or more cases from different households are identified within the same classroom or within the same cohort outside of the classroom such as the lunchroom or extra-curricular activities (sports, music, after school clubs, youth group, etc.) The health department can work with you to control further spread of infections.

For more information and resources, go online to archokc.org/health.



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ARCHDIOCESE OF OKLAHOMA CITY | P.O. Box 32180 | Oklahoma City, OK 73123 | (405) 721-5651