



CATHOLIC SCHOOL RESOURCES

OPERATING DURING COVID-19

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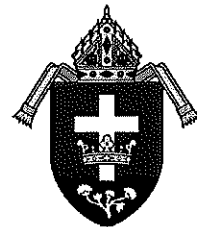
June 1, 2020

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**Roman Catholic Diocese of
Amarillo and Lubbock**

PROTOCOLS FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Purpose

In the face of the COVID-19 global pandemic, Catholic schools in the Diocese of Amarillo and Diocese of Lubbock are committed to dynamic planning and preparation for the safe operations of school for the 2020-2021 academic school year. The document was prepared using the Texas Education Agency (TEA) materials, including the agency document on SY 20-21 Public Health Planning Guidance, and Interim Fall Guidance for Reopening and Remote Synchronous and Asynchronous Instruction published by the Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops Education Department (TCCB ED).

This guidance aims to provide the safest methods of learning and instruction while balancing the greatest sense of normalcy for students, faculty, staff and parents. The goal is for clear planning and vision that supports our schools to be agile in response to each potential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. In doing so, schools can continue to provide a Christ-centered, rigorous academic educational experience for students that parents trust and rely upon as the preferred choice for their child's education now and into the future.

This tool is intended to be fluid in so far as it is designed to reflect the latest information from national, state and local public health experts regarding COVID-19 disease transmission and mitigation strategies. The information contained within is subject to change at any time as new information emerges from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the Texas Department of State Health Services (Texas DSHS) and in accordance with updated guidance from Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops Education Department (TCCB ED), the Dioceses of Amarillo and/or Lubbock and our local government and county health department.

This guidance document contains information on four sets or practices that minimize the likelihood of viral spread.

1. **Provide Notice:** Requirements for parental and public notices
2. **Prevent:** Required and recommended practices to prevent the virus from entering the School
3. **Respond:** Required and recommended practices to respond to a lab-confirmed case in the school:
4. **Mitigate:** Required and recommended practices to mitigate likelihood of spread inside the school.

The prevention and mitigation practices outlined in this document are designed to significantly reduce the likelihood that a coronavirus outbreak occurs on campus. Catholic schools should take their local public health context into account throughout the year as they determine which of the prevention and mitigation recommendations they implement. Catholic schools should stringently apply prevention and mitigation recommendations to adults on campuses. Consistently implementing protocols is the best way to reduce the potential negative impact of infection on students' educational experiences.

Prevent:

Current Understanding of COVID-19

The virus that causes COVID-19 can infect people of all ages, and Catholic school administrators, teachers, and staff should do everything feasible to keep students safe.

There is currently no vaccine to prevent coronavirus disease (COVID-19). The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus.

While it is not possible to eliminate all risk of furthering the spread of COVID-19, the current science suggests there are many steps schools can take to significantly reduce the risks to students, teachers, staff, and their families.

Symptoms of COVID-19:

People with COVID-19 have had a wide range of symptoms reported – ranging from mild symptoms to severe illness.

Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. People with these symptoms or combinations of symptoms may have COVID-19:

Cough	Chills	Shortness of Breath	Fever > 100 or feeling feverish
Muscle Pain	Headache	Sore Throat	Repeated shaking with chills
		Diarrhea	New loss of taste or smell

Additional Information about COVID-19 Symptoms in Children - Children have similar symptoms to adults and generally have mild illness. Symptoms in children have included the above listed symptoms as well as in some cases runny nose, vomiting and diarrhea.

Disease Transmission:

- The virus is thought to spread primarily from person to person.
- Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).
- Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks.
- These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.
- COVID-19 may be spread by people who are not showing symptoms (known as asymptomatic spread).

Preventative Health Measures:

- Frequent handwashing
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands and properly cover your coughs and sneezes.
- Avoid close contact with others- stay at least 6 feet from others and do not gather in groups.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a cloth face cover when around others
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces.
- Stay home if you are sick

Screening Questions for COVID-19 Before Campus Access:

- Catholic schools must require all school personnel to self-screen for COVID-19 symptoms before coming onto campus each day including taking their own temperature. School personnel would report to the Catholic school if: (a) they have come into close contact with an individual who is lab-confirmed with COVID-19; or (b) they themselves have COVID-19 symptoms.
- Catholic schools must develop a plan for screening students to prevent the spread of COVID-19 to determine if: (a) they have the COVID-19 symptoms listed in this document; or (b) they have had close contact with an individual who is lab-confirmed with COVID-19.
- Catholic schools should restrict visits in schools to only those essential to the school operations. If necessary to allow visitors onto campus, Catholic schools should screen all visitors to determine if: (a) they have COVID-19 symptoms listed in this document; or (b) they have had close contact with an individual who is lab-confirmed with COVID-19. When practical, screening questions could be supplemented with temperature checks of adults.
- Catholic schools are permitted to prevent any individual who fails the screening criteria from being admitted to the campus until they meet any of the criteria for re-entry to the campus.

Screening Questionnaire Information

- When asking individuals if they have symptoms for COVID-19, Catholic schools must only require the individual to provide a “Yes” or “No” to the overall statement that they are symptomatic for COVID-19, as opposed to asking the individual for specific symptom confirmation. Catholic schools are not entitled to collect information during screening on the specific health information of an individual beyond that they are symptom free.
- All school personnel must report to the school administrator if:
 - (a) they have come into close contact with an individual who is lab-confirmed with COVID-19; or
 - (b) they themselves have COVID-19 symptoms.
- Once it is determined that individuals who responded “Yes” to either of these questions have met the criteria for re-entry, Catholic schools must destroy those individuals’ responses.

Individuals Confirmed, Suspected, or Exposed to COVID-19

- Any individuals—including teachers, staff, students, volunteers or other campus visitors—who themselves either: (a) are lab-confirmed to have COVID-19; or (b) experience the symptoms of COVID-19 must stay at home throughout the infection period, and cannot return to campus until the Catholic school screens the individual to determine any of the below conditions for campus re-entry have been met:
 - In the case of an individual who was diagnosed with COVID-19, the individual may return to school when all three of the following criteria are met:
 - at least three days (72 hours) have passed since recovery (resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications)
 - the individual has improvement in symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath); and
 - at least ten days have passed since symptoms first appeared.
 - In the case of an individual that is asymptomatic but has received a positive COVID-19 test result, the individual may not return to the campus until ten days have passed since a positive test.
- Individuals—including students, teachers, staff, volunteers or other campus visitors—who have had close contact with someone who is lab-confirmed to have COVID-19, as narrowly defined in this document and as determined by the appropriate public health agency, should stay at home through the 14-day incubation period, and should not be allowed on campus.
 - Catholic schools should screen individuals after the incubation period has concluded, and if the individual did not experience COVID-19 symptoms during that period, the individual can be allowed back on campus. If the individual experienced symptoms, they must stay at home until the conditions outlined above have been met.
- In the case of an individual who has symptoms that could be COVID-19 and who is not evaluated by a medical professional or tested for COVID-19, such individual is assumed to have COVID-19, and the individual may not return to the campus until the individual has completed the same three-step set of criteria listed above.
- If the individual has symptoms that could be COVID-19 and wants to return to school before completing the above stay at home period, the individual must either (a) obtain a medical doctor—licensed in the state of Texas, note clearing the individual for return based on an alternative diagnosis or (b) receive two separate confirmations at least 24 hours apart that they are free of COVID-19 via acute infection tests at an approved COVID-19 testing location. <https://tdem.texas.gov/covid-19/>.

Identifying Possible COVID-19 Cases on Campus

- Schools must immediately separate any student who shows COVID-19 symptoms while at school until the student can be picked up by a parent or guardian and immediately notify the diocesan superintendent.
- Schools must clean the areas used by the individual who shows COVID-19 symptoms while at school immediately.

- Student who report feeling feverish should be given an immediate temperature check to determine if they are symptomatic for COVID-19.

RESPOND:

Practices to Respond to a Lab-Confirmed Case in the School

Required Actions if Individuals with Lab-Confirmed Cases Have Been in a School:

- If an individual who has been in a school is lab-confirmed to have COVID-19, the school must notify the superintendent and its local health department, in accordance with applicable federal, state and local laws and regulations.
- Schools must close off areas that are heavily used by the individual with the lab-confirmed case (student, teacher, or staff) until the non-porous surfaces in those areas can be disinfected, unless more than 3 days have already passed since that person was on campus.
- Consistent with diocesan and school notification requirements for other communicable diseases, and **consistent with legal confidentiality requirements**, schools must notify all teachers, staff, and families of all students in a school if a lab-confirmed COVID-19 case is identified among students, teachers or staff who participate on any on campus activities.

MITIGATE:

Practices to Mitigate the Likelihood of COVID-19 Spread Inside the School

General Health and Hygiene Practices

- Schools should have hand sanitizer and/or hand washing stations with soap and water at each entrance. They should provide hand sanitizer and/or hand washing stations with soap and water in every classroom.
- Students, teachers, staff, and campus visitors should sanitize and/or wash hands frequently.
 - Catholic schools are encouraged to have students engage in supervised handwashing for at least 20 seconds at least two times each day, in addition to washing hands after using the restroom and before eating.
 - Catholic schools must teach students good handwashing techniques.
 - Students, teachers, staff, and campus visitors should cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue, and if not available, covered in their elbows. Used tissues should be thrown in the trash, hands should be washed immediately with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or hand sanitizer should be used.
- Campuses should institute more frequent cleaning practices, including additional cleaning by janitorial staff, as well as provide the opportunity for children to clean

their own spaces before and after they are used, in ways that are safe and developmentally appropriate.

- Schools should arrange for additional cleaning and disinfecting of surfaces that are touched in common throughout the day. This would include objects such as door handles, common tables/desks, shared supplies such as art supplies, and high touch devices such as shared laptops or tablets.
- Schools should arrange for cleaning of commonly touched surfaces in classrooms between different class groups, if the same room will be used by multiple class groups.
- The CDC has provided guidance on cleaning community buildings to prevent COVID-19 spread.
- Schools must ensure all cleaning products are stored safely, including storing harmful products where children cannot access them, and ensuring that harmful cleaning products are not used near children.
- Whenever possible, schools should open windows or otherwise work to improve air flow by allowing outside air to circulate in the building.
- If a building has remained dormant for an extended period, it is recommended schools review CDC guidance on maintaining water system safety when buildings are unused for extended periods of time and apply this guidance as appropriate.
- The CDC provides a range of printed resources such as posters that promote protective measures and can serve as helpful reminders of best practices. Schools may use these or may create their own reminders.
- Catholic schools must provide instruction to students on appropriate hygiene practices consistent with the mitigation practices adopted by the Catholic school. This instruction should be reinforced and repeated throughout the pandemic.

Masks Overview

- Wear masks with two or more layers to stop the spread of COVID-19
- Wear the mask over your nose and mouth and secure it under your chin
- Masks should be worn by people two years and older
- Masks should NOT be worn by children younger than two, people who have trouble breathing, or people who cannot remove the mask without assistance
- Do **NOT** wear masks intended for healthcare workers, for example, N95 respirators
- **CDC does not recommend the use of face shields alone.** Evaluation of face shields is ongoing but effectiveness is unknown at this time.
- Evaluation of masks and gaiter materials and structure is ongoing.
- For the purposes of this document, masks include non-medical grade disposable face masks, cloth face coverings (over the nose and mouth).
- Consistent with state and local regulations, local school district best practices and diocesan directives for Catholic schools **all employees and visitors must wear masks.**

Student-Teacher Groupings

- Where feasible without disrupting the educational experience, encourage students to practice social distancing.
- In classroom spaces, student work spaces should be placed a minimum of six feet apart.
- Use of Non-Classroom Spaces
 - When feasible and appropriate (for example, in physical education classes as weather permits), it is preferable for students to gather outside, rather than inside, because of likely reduced risk of virus spread outdoors.
- Campuses should plan for entry, exit, and transition procedures that reduce large group gatherings (of students and/or adults) in close proximity. Consider staggering school start and end times, and/or provide alternate entry and exit locations to ensure even distribution of students entering/exiting at each door, providing guidance to students to enter one at a time and wait six feet apart outside the entrance, and, where appropriate, encouraging parents to remain outside during drop-off and pick-up.
- Catholic schools should consider practices that reduce the likelihood that students meet the close contact definition (defined below) at lunch. This could include having students eat lunch at their desks. It could include the use of seats that are spaced at least 6 feet apart. It could include the use of dividers on cafeteria tables if they can serve the purpose of shielding the students from respiratory droplets with which they might otherwise come into contact. For meal service itself, consider individually plated meals with disposable food service items for students who do not bring their own lunch.

Transportation Recommendations

- For those Catholic schools offering transportation, they should consider requiring students and staff to use hand sanitizer upon boarding the bus.
- For bus routes where students need to sit in close proximity within the bus, consider having all students for whom it is developmentally appropriate wear masks or face shields while on a bus.
- When possible, schools should open windows to allow outside air to circulate in the bus.
- Catholic schools should encourage families to drop students off, carpool, or walk with their student to school to reduce possible virus exposure on buses.
- Buses should be thoroughly cleaned after each bus trip, focusing on high-touch surfaces such as bus seats, steering wheels, knobs, and door handles. During cleaning, open windows to allow for additional ventilation and air flow.

Staffing

- Employees of Catholic schools, like employees of any organization, must continue to meet the work expectations set by their employers, subject to any applicable employment contract terms.
- School teachers and staff should be trained specifically on the protocols outlined in this document and the practices adopted by the Catholic school. Additionally, while

not developed with this exact guidance in mind, Texas Agri-Life Extension offers a free online course on Special Considerations for Infection Control During COVID-19 (2hrs). This course is intended for frontline childcare workers, but the principles of the course apply equally to those working in school settings.

- Catholic schools should attempt to reduce in-person staff meetings or other opportunities for adults to congregate in close settings. When those meetings are necessary, use masks and/or dividers, and schools should also consider whether increased airflow from the outdoors is possible in those settings.

Disease Control Checklist	
Preventative Measures Training	
Utilize frequent hand washing / cough and sneeze etiquette / avoid touching eyes and nose with unclean hands.	
Train faculty and staff on proper techniques including how to manage students.	
Teach students proper techniques on grade level and reinforce often.	
Install hand sanitizer stations throughout the school building especially at entrances, in high traffic areas and in areas without sinks.	
Require handwashing upon arrival to school/each classroom, after breaks, before and after eating or preparing food, after bathroom, after outdoor activities, if hands are visibly dirty, before and after medication administration, after use of tissues or coughing/sneezing.	
Implement handwashing at scheduled intervals in addition to those listed above.	
Ensure adequate supply/stock of hygiene items: soap, paper towels, hand sanitizer, tissues, waste baskets	
Place developmentally appropriate posters with proper handwashing steps near sinks and in restrooms.	
Disease Control Checklist	
Illness	
Require and actively encourage students and staff to stay home if they are sick or are experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19	
Revise/Relax attendance policies for students, faculty and staff to allow individuals to freely stay home if sick. Remove strict attendance policies that would inadvertently encourage someone from attending with even mild symptoms, including elimination of perfect attendance awards	
Promptly identify, isolate and remove students, faculty or staff members that exhibit symptoms of illness while at school	
Provide PPE for staff members caring for sick students	
Implement screening procedures for fever/cough/shortness of breath for students, faculty, staff and visitors upon arrival- consider active and passive screening techniques	

Maintain thorough daily staff and student attendance reports including details of health status for absences	
Limit access for visitors, volunteers and guests inside the school building to reduce traffic within the school	
Implement a mandatory measure requiring the use of masks on school property when / where not 6 feet distanced.	
Acquire replacement masks for students/staff in need, for those who forget their mask or if a mask becomes soiled while at school	
Provide and require PPE including masks for food service workers, janitorial staff, staff members caring for sick students, and for staff members that must perform tasks whereby social distancing is not possible	
Train faculty and staff on proper use of PPE, donning and doffing masks including management of students	
Teach students proper mask wearing/donning/doffing/storing techniques on grade level and reinforced often	
Disease Control Checklist Cleaning and Disinfecting	
Survey cleaning supply vendors on availability and provide vendors with needs and timelines to order adequate supplies	
Utilize disinfectants per label instructions and only those that are EPA approved for COVID-19	
Train cleaning staff on enhanced cleaning requirements, cleaning and disinfecting protocols, adherence to guidelines for “dry times”, proper use of EPA approved disinfectants, and proper use of PPE	
Provide frequent disinfection of commonly touched surfaces throughout each school day. This includes work areas, counters, restrooms, sink handles, doorknobs, stair railings, and any other shared surface any other shared surface	

Encourage and train teachers and staff to participate in proper and frequent disinfection of surfaces in their classroom or work space	
Expand on daily after school cleaning and disinfecting procedures including desks, chairs, doors, windows, light switches, lockers, toys and games, cubbies, Pre-K nap pads, and any other surface that may be touched by students or staff daily	
Be prepared to follow CDC guidance on disinfecting your building or facility if a student or staff member is confirmed with COVID-19	
Remove toys that cannot be cleaned and sanitized. Remove cloth/fabric toys	
Remove toys that young children are more likely to place in their mouths or on their face	
Store student belongings in spaces that have ample separation. Such as nap mats in individually labeled bins	
Clean or replace air conditioner filters and increase ventilation rates and air exchange in the buildings to the greatest degree possible	
Disease Control Checklist Utilize Social Distancing	
Require social distancing, maintaining at least 6 feet of physical separation between individuals to the maximum extent possible.	
Maximize spacing of desks to ensure social distancing of 6ft between students, all students facing the same direction and avoid grouping desks.	
Consider outdoor teaching or learning activities as weather permits and if social distancing can be maintained.	
Consider abandoning the use of student lockers or rotate students to lockers	

Prohibit congregation of students in hallways and lunch rooms	
Remove self-service salad bars and any other food conveyance where students share utensils to serve or obtain food.	
Consider adaptations that incorporate social distancing and online alternatives for any group event.	
Consider how to meet the needs of vulnerable students and vulnerable teachers/staff.	
Arrange scheduling such that students remain in the same classroom with the same children for the entire school day to minimize disease spread and reduce interaction with school population	
Consider having teachers change classes rather than students	
Consider remote/online (live stream) class instruction or independent online study in classrooms during school hours.	
Serve box lunches in classrooms, or modify lunch periods if ample spacing of students cannot be accomplished in the cafeteria.	
If rooms are utilized by multiple classes or student groups such as computer labs, science labs or cafeterias, disinfect all commonly touched surfaces between student groups or avoid use all together.	
If classroom changes cannot be avoided, stagger classroom changes and bell schedules to minimize the crowding of hallways.	
Prepare plans for the possibility of opening school and restoring operations in phases due to capacity mandates or to effectively manage all new processes and procedures.	
Implement <u>more than 1</u> entry/exit point for drop off and dismissal procedures to limit crowding and congestion. Each entry/exit point requires continuous monitoring by staff for the duration of the drop off or dismissal time period for security and safety.	

Redesign drop off and dismissal procedures to limit crowding, limit visitors in the building and to provide the highest level of safety for all students.	
Assess school and adjoining spaces that may be repurposed to provide optimal social distancing and reduced class sizes. Eliminating the co-mingling of classes in shared spaces increases a school's ability to contain the illness and may prevent entire school closures due to a potential exposure in one group.	
In secondary schools consider block scheduling to reduce student movement during the day and cross contamination of classrooms	