

CATHOLIC SCHOOL RESOURCES OPERATING DURING COVID-19

August 4, 2021
For 2021-2022 school year

Adapted:



**Roman Catholic Diocese of
Amarillo and Lubbock**



Center for Disease Control (CDC) - Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools

Updated – July 9, 2021

Key Takeaways

- Students benefit from in-person learning, and safely returning to in-person instruction in the fall 2021 is a priority.
- Vaccination is currently the leading public health prevention strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic. Promoting vaccination can help schools safely return to in-person learning as well as extracurricular activities and sports.
- Masks should be worn indoors by all individuals who are not fully vaccinated. Consistent and correct mask use by people who are not fully vaccinated is especially important indoors and in crowded settings, when physical distancing cannot be maintained.
- CDC recommends schools maintain at least 3 feet of physical distance between students within classrooms, combined with indoor mask wearing by people who are not fully vaccinated, to reduce transmission risk. When it is not possible to maintain a physical distance of at least 3 feet, such as when schools cannot fully re-open while maintaining these distances, it is especially important to layer multiple other prevention strategies, such as indoor masking.
- Screening testing, ventilation, handwashing and respiratory etiquette, staying home when sick and getting tested, contact tracing in combination with quarantine and isolation, and cleaning and disinfection are also important layers of prevention to keep schools safe.
- Students, teachers, and staff should stay home when they have signs of any infectious illness and be referred to their healthcare provider for testing and care.
- Many schools serve children under the age of 12 who are not eligible for vaccination at this time. Therefore, this guidance emphasizes implementing layered prevention strategies (e.g., using multiple prevention strategies together consistently) to protect people who are not fully vaccinated, including students, teachers, staff, and other members of their households.
- COVID-19 prevention strategies remain critical to protect people, including students, teachers, and staff, who are not fully vaccinated, especially in areas of moderate-to-high community transmission levels.
- Localities should monitor community transmission, vaccination coverage, screening testing, and occurrence of outbreaks to guide decisions on the level of layered prevention strategies (e.g., physical distancing, screening testing).

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 safe operations of schools for the 2021-2022 academic school year.

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.

Vaccination is currently the leading public health prevention strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic and is highly encouraged by our dioceses and our schools.

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 3 feet).
- 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 3 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 for COVID-19 Before Campus Access:

- Catholic personnel will self-screen for COVID-19 symptoms before coming onto campus each day. School personnel will 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.
- CDC does not currently recommend schools conduct symptom screening for all students in grades K-12 on a routine (e.g., daily) basis.
- Parents, caregivers, or guardians (“caregivers”) should monitor their children for symptoms of infectious illness every day through home-based symptom screening.
- Students who are sick should not attend school in-person.
- All schools should require visitors require visitors to self-screen to determine if: (a) they have COVID-19 symptoms; or (b) they have had close contact with an individual who is lab-confirmed with COVID-19.
- 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.
- 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.

Symptoms that would exclude a student, staff member, or volunteer from coming to school:

- For screening purposes, we recommend this [list](#) from the CDC. Symptom screening should not try to identify every known symptom of COVID-19. No single symptom indicates someone has COVID-19, and many COVID-19 symptoms can occur when a person does not have COVID-19 or any infectious illness. Instead, use symptom screening to determine if a student currently has an infectious illness that they might pass onto others. The presence of any of the symptoms below generally suggests an individual has an infectious illness and should not attend school, regardless of whether the illness is COVID-19. For anyone with chronic conditions, symptom presence should represent a change from their typical health status to warrant exclusion from school:
 - temperature of 100 degrees Fahrenheit or higher (CDC states 100.4)
 - sore throat
 - cough (for students with chronic cough due to allergies or asthma, a change in their cough from baseline)
 - difficulty breathing (for students with asthma, a change from their baseline)

- breathing)
- diarrhea or vomiting
- new loss of taste or smell
- new onset of severe headache, especially with a fever

Return to School after illness:

- Schools should follow the TCCB ED Health Manual regarding guidelines for returning to school after an illness.
- Per the TCCB ED Health Manual,
 - if a student has a fever, they can return to school when they are fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever suppressing medications.
 - if a student has vomiting, nausea or severe abdominal pain, they can return to school when they are symptom-free for 24 hours.
 - if a student has a sore throat, acute cold or persistent cough, they can return to school when they are symptom-free
- 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.

Close contact or exposure to COVID-19

- **Unvaccinated individuals who are un-masked and have had close contact with someone who is lab-confirmed to have COVID-19, AND has not received a COVID-19 vaccination,** are required to quarantine for 10 days.
 - **UN-MASKED and UNVACCINATED individuals who are in close contact with someone who is lab-confirmed to have COVID-19 will be required to quarantine for 10 days. Students in this category will pivot to virtual / at home learning.**
 - 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.

- **Vaccinated** individuals
Per CDC guidance, vaccinated individuals, or those who have tested positive for COVID-19 within the past 3 months, who have had close contact with someone who is lab-confirmed to have COVID-19 **AND** who show no symptoms, should wear a mask indoors in public for 14 days following exposure or until a test result is negative. Testing should take place 3-5 days after exposure.

RESPOND:

Practices to Respond to a Lab-Confirmed COVID-19 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.
 - **UN-MASKED and UNVACCINATED individuals who are in close contact will be required to quarantine for 10 days, and will pivot to virtual / at home learning. Close contact or exposure protocols listed above apply.**

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.

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 three 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.

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.

PART 2 – REQUIRED

TCCB ED Interim Fall Guidance for Remote Synchronous and Asynchronous Instruction

Attendance

- Per TCCB ED guidelines, students must attend 90% of a course in order to be awarded credit for the course and/or to be promoted to the next grade. Given the public health situation, student attendance may be earned through the delivery of remote instruction.
- Catholic schools should notify parents of any changes to the school's policy regarding attendance during the COVID-19 pandemic.

REMOTE SYNCHRONOUS AND ASYNCHRONOUS INSTRUCTION:

- Must address the required curriculum per TCCB ED guidelines.

Synchronous Instruction – Defined as two-way, real-time, live instruction between teachers and students, through the computer or other electronic devices or over the phone.

- Teachers must take and post attendance as if the student were physically present in the on-campus classroom
- Students who are not logged in at the teacher's documented official attendance time should be marked absent
- Teachers should take and post attendance at a specific schedule

A minimum number of daily instructional minutes are required:

- Daily instructional minutes need not be consecutive
 - 3rd through 5th grade – 180 instructional minutes
 - 6th through 12th grade – 240 instructional minutes
 - PK - 2nd grade – asynchronous methods are encouraged.
- A program would meet the remote synchronous method requirements if the daily instructional minute minimums above are met, even if part of the day includes asynchronous activities. For example, a high school program that scheduled synchronous instruction for 120 minutes in the morning, then released students to work independently for several hours before a second scheduled synchronous session totaling 120 minutes in the afternoon would meet the daily instructional minute requirement detailed above.

- For remote synchronous instruction, time spent for in-class breakfast and recess has been excluded from the calculation of daily instructional minutes listed above and should not be included in the instructional minutes
- Time students spend in work-based learning opportunities can be included in the daily instructional minute calculation; these include internships, externships, apprenticeships, and mentorships.

Grading

- School grading policies for remote student work should be consistent with those used before COVID-19 for on campus assignments.

Teacher Preparation to Deliver Remote Synchronous Instruction

- Ensure teachers are trained to deliver remote instruction on the Catholic school's chosen platform
- Ensure teachers have practiced delivering a synchronous instruction lesson
- Ensure there is tech support available to troubleshoot student access issues

Asynchronous Remote Instruction - Defined as a curricular experience where students engage in the learning materials on their own time, interacting intermittently with the teacher via the computer or other electronic devices or over the phone and involves far more self-guided student instruction. Asynchronous Instruction is available for all grade levels PK-12.

Instruction that does not require having the instructor and student engaged at the same time. In this method, students learn from instruction that is not necessarily being delivered in-person or in real time. This type of instruction may include various forms of digital and online learning, such as prerecorded video lessons or game-based learning tasks that students complete on their own, and pre-assigned work and formative assessments made available to students on paper.

This method allows Catholic schools the flexibility for providing high-quality instructional practices with daily engagement measures. Catholic schools can provide primarily asynchronous instructional methods or through a combination of asynchronous and synchronous instruction together.

- Does not require all participants to be virtually present at the same time
 - Example: Live interactive classes with students & teachers participating real time, teacher supported work time on video conference calls, scheduled and timed online tests

Asynchronous education plans should address four key requirements:

- **Instructional Schedule:** Expectations for when and in what setting students are learning, loosely equivalent to an on-campus instructional day
- **Material Design:** Curriculum should be designed for asynchronous student learning
- **Student Progress:** Daily student progress is defined and measured
- **Implementation:** The Catholic school must provide educators with support to provide remote instruction

- Plans should be posted online for parents to see
- Plans may include differentiation by grade & subject, but only one plan per Catholic school
- All plans must be reviewed and/or approved by the superintendent

Grading

- School grading policies for remote student work must be consistent with those used before COVID for on campus assignments
 - Staff should check daily for student “engagement.”
 - Students who are not “engaged” that day should be marked absent.

