



CATHOLIC  
COMMUNITY SCHOOLS  
*teaching, sharing and living the Gospel*

Catholic Community Schools  
COVID-19 Opening Guidelines  
2021-2022



# 2021-2022 Catholic Community Schools Opening Guidelines

These guidelines and prevention strategies have been developed for our PK-12 Catholic Community Schools in the continuing COVID-19 pandemic. They are based on the [2021-2022 Catholic School Opening Guidance](#) set forth by the Diocese of St. Cloud and follow recommendations by the Minnesota Department of Health, consultation with Minnesota nonpublic school leaders, experts in Minnesota health care networks, and specific needs of our parish and school communities.

In support of in-person instruction and activities, we will follow mitigation strategies that support:

1. keeping COVID-19 infections out of schools
2. preventing spread within schools
3. serving the needs of employees, students, and families through minimizing disruptions due to exposures, infections, and recovery times.

These efforts will require all members of the community to share responsibility and accountability to allow for success and the continued building of the Kingdom of God through our educational ministries.

**All schools within the Catholic Community Schools system will use this Guidance and follow all required measures.** This Guidance may be updated as required by mandates or appropriate recommendations by the church, public health officials, or government authorities, as warranted by changing conditions with the COVID-19 pandemic.

There are 3 sections of this Guidance:

1. Prevention Strategies to Reduce Transmission of COVID-19
2. Operational Practices
3. Resources

We will promptly and clearly communicate changes to our policies and practices with school leaders, staff, faculty, and families.

## Prevention Strategies to Reduce Transmission of COVID-19

### Vaccinations

COVID-19 vaccinations provide the strongest level of mitigation against COVID-19, preventing serious harm and greatly reducing spread among individuals and communities. People 12 years and older are currently eligible for vaccination.

- **Information regarding the availability of vaccines for eligible groups can be found [here](#).**
- Vaccinations are not required for adults and students in diocesan Catholic schools but are strongly encouraged for those eligible to receive them.
- Vaccinated employees and students are not required to quarantine for close contact exposures.

### Face Coverings

For the 2021-2022 school year, Catholic Community Schools, along with the MDH and the CDC, urge universal indoor face covering for all people in PK-12 school settings, regardless of vaccination status.

- Face coverings are required for all persons when riding district-provided or public transportation, in accordance with federal mandates.
- Face coverings may be required in situations where schools have services provided by staff from a partner school district.
- Face coverings will be optional but strongly recommended of employees, students, and visitors of Catholic Community Schools as long as schools do not exceed a 5% COVID-19 infection rate\* of the total school population within a 14-day rolling average time period, at which point temporary universal face covering will likely be required. Each individual school's infection rate will be evaluated, not the Catholic Community Schools system as a whole. \*This rate has been determined by local health officials to be the warning point in which taking action to mitigate further transmission is necessary.
- In addition to transmission levels within our Catholic Community Schools, we will also be watching local transmission levels in our community, paying close attention when levels are in the "high" or "substantial" levels. We will consider temporary, universal face covering during periods of "substantial" or "high" transmission rates of COVID-19, following the [CDC COVID-19 Data Tracker](#).
- Face covering policies will be consistent for school-day and after-school extracurricular activities and events.
- It is critical that all school programming and activities allow all students to participate without penalty or stigma regarding the use of face coverings. School employees are responsible for supporting a culture of understanding and respect among themselves, students, and parents. This will be communicated clearly, and regularly as needed.
- During times when face coverings are optional, we will promote a school culture that is respectful of each other's choices on face coverings, and we will not tolerate any comments or actions that show disrespect towards another's choice.
- During times of temporary, universal face covering, face coverings must be worn properly; the correct fit, fully covering the nose and mouth. [View Poster](#)

## Physical Distancing

Transmission of COVID-19 is significantly reduced through the use of consistent physical distancing practices.

- Our schools will aim for at least 3 feet of physical distance in classroom settings and when students are indoors whenever feasible.
- Our schools will continue to use assigned seating arrangements, whenever feasible, to aid any required reporting of cases to MDH or contact tracing needs.
- Our schools will use cohorts or classroom-based seating for school day assemblies, activities, and masses whenever feasible.

## Visitors

- Schools will limit visitors, guests, and vendors to those who are a part of essential activities.
- All persons who enter the school building must comply with health and safety procedures, including self-screening for symptoms of illness and exposure to COVID-19.
- Self-screening information and instructions will be posted at all entrances used by the school for visitors. [View Poster](#)
- Unvaccinated visitors are strongly encouraged to wear face coverings.
- Schools will strive to arrange all visitors by appointment, whenever possible. Please call ahead before visiting the school.

## Ventilation

- Schools will ensure that all ventilation systems are operational and support exchanging air in indoor spaces.

## Handwashing and Respiratory Etiquette

- Schools will teach and promote routine proper handwashing and respiratory etiquette (covering coughs and sneezes). [View Poster](#)

## Staying Home When Sick and Getting Tested

With the prioritized mitigation strategy of keeping COVID-19 out of schools, we ask that all CCS employees and families keep informed about the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 in order to be proactive in protecting themselves and each other.

- **See the attached CCS COVID-19 Symptoms Decision Tree for guidance on when to stay home.**
- It is strongly recommended that anyone experiencing signs and symptoms of COVID-19 is tested with a PCR or NAAT lab-confirmed test.

## Sending Sick People Home

- If a student or employee becomes ill with signs or symptoms consistent with COVID-19, as described in the CCS COVID-19 Symptoms Decision Tree, they will immediately be sent home, regardless of COVID-19 vaccination status or prior history of illness. While waiting to be picked up, students will be separated from others and provided with a face covering, if not wearing one already.

## Reporting Cases

- In the event that an employee or student has a PCR or NAAT lab-confirmed case of COVID-19, schools will [complete a report to MDH](#), in accordance with [Minnesota Rule 4605.7070](#).

## Close Contacts

- To identify potential close contact exposures, schools will gather and review the infected person's activities during the time they were infectious, starting two days prior to the date symptoms started, or two days prior to the positive test if no symptoms are present.
- Close contacts include ANY household member of the infected person and those who were within 6 feet of the infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period.
- Schools will notify anyone identified as close contact as soon as possible and advise them to watch for symptoms of COVID-19.

## Quarantines

- Schools will utilize the following quarantine measures for employee or student close contacts to suppress potential transmission of COVID-19:
  - Unvaccinated close contacts or anyone who has not had PCR or NAAT lab-confirmed COVID-19 in the last 90 days must quarantine for a minimum period of:
    - 10 days, if no symptoms develop and no PCR or NAAT COVID-19 test is pursued
    - OR
    - 7 days, if no symptoms develop and the close contact has a negative lab-confirmed PCR or NAAT test that was obtained on or after the 5th day following the last day of exposure. (Last day of exposure is Day 0.)
  - Close contact students wearing a properly fitted mask that covers the nose and mouth are not required to quarantine.
  - Persons who have had PCR or NAAT lab-confirmed COVID-19 within the past 90 days are not required to quarantine unless they have symptoms consistent with COVID-19.
  - Fully vaccinated persons (who have reached full vaccinated status at least 14 days prior to exposure) are not required to quarantine unless they have symptoms consistent with COVID-19.
  - Schools must verify vaccination status for students or employees in order for them to not be required to quarantine. This may be accomplished by the presentation of a vaccination card to the school. Schools are not required to file copies of vaccination cards and are expected to maintain confidentiality and discretion with this information.
- Distance learning will be available for students on medical quarantine.

## Cleaning and Disinfecting

The COVID-19 virus is primarily spread through airborne droplets, but may also be spread through physical contact with surfaces contaminated with the virus. Catholic Community Schools will continue with established disinfecting and cleaning practices of high-traffic, high contact areas at regular intervals throughout each school day. For other areas, daily cleaning and disinfection is sufficient.

## **Operational Practices**

- In-person learning will be the primary goal of our educational efforts, with reasonable accommodations made for individuals due to their needs according to school policies. Schools are not expected to provide extensive alternative learning models.
- The use of cohorts and physical distancing, whenever feasible, will remain common practice this year, including during lunch.
- Celebration of school day masses, prayer services or other assemblies will follow the protocols in place by each parish, with the use of cohorts whenever feasible. Parishioners or guests who attend such events should continue to be seated separately whenever possible. Schools will strive to find a balance of including family members in these events while maintaining practices that allow for safety and follow-through of protocols.
- Services provided through public districts may require protocols that are different than those of Catholic Community Schools, and we will adhere to these requirements.
- Athletic practices, sporting events, and competitions will follow the MSHSL guidelines for athletes and spectators.

## Resources

### **Diocese of Saint Cloud Coronavirus Updates and School Opening Guidance**

<https://stcdio.org/coronavirus-update/>

### **Vaccine Information**

Minnesota Department of Health (MDH)

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/vaccine/index.html>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/index.html>

The Congregation on the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF)

[https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20201221\\_nota-vaccini-anticovid\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20201221_nota-vaccini-anticovid_en.html)

Vaccines and ethical considerations in light of COVID-19 (Central Minnesota Catholic, Dec 2020)

<https://thecentralminnesotacatholic.org/ask-father-tom-vaccines-and-ethical-considerations-in-light-of-covid-19/>

### **Tracking COVID-19 transmission rates**

<https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#datatracker-home>

### **Reporting and Handling COVID-19 Cases**

COVID-19 case reporting form

<https://redcap.health.state.mn.us/redcap/surveys/?s=KKWLDH3ARC>

MDH Recommendations for Handling a confirmed case of COVID-19

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/casehandle.pdf>

COVID-19 fact sheet for school use

<https://www.hennepin.us/-/media/hennepinus/residents/health-medical/infectious-diseases-fact-sheets/covid-19-provider-technical-fact-sheet.pdf>

### **COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Settings**

Printable signs and posters

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/materials/index.html#posters>

Minnesota Department of Health

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/schoolrecs.pdf>

Centers for Disease Control

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k12-guidance.html>

American Academy of Pediatrics

<https://www.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/covid-19-planning-considerations-return-to-in-person-education-in-schools/>