

**“Rediscover the Treasure of a
Catholic School Education”:
2020 Fall Return-to-School Guidance**

**Diocese of El Paso
Office of Catholic Schools
Aug 3, 2020**



“Let’s . . . make this time of challenge a time of opportunity in which families around El Paso will rediscover the treasure of a Catholic school education.”
(Bishop Mark Seitz, *Letter to the Catholic School Principals of El Paso*, July 29, 2020)

“Lord, may you bless the world, give health to our bodies and comfort our hearts. You ask us not to be afraid. Yet, our faith is weak and we are fearful. But you, Lord, will not leave us at the mercy of the storm. Tell us again: Do not be afraid” (Mt 28:5). And we, together with Peter, will “cast all our anxieties onto you, for you care about us” (1 Pet 5:7).
(Pope Francis I, *Strong in the Face of Tribulation*)

(updated 8.10.2020)

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Office of the Superintendent
Diocese of El Paso, Texas



“No other schools can offer the Faith-based, personalized, family-oriented service students will receive from us. No other schools can bring together children from families that share their dreams for their children and will offer them the foundation not only in academics but in virtues that will guide them through life. No other schools will form them to know how much they are loved by God and able to be supported by God’s grace in every trial.” (Bishop Mark Seitz, Letter to the Catholic School Principals of the Diocese of El Paso, July 29, 2020)

August 3, 2020

Dear El Paso Catholic School Students, Parents, Families, Staff, Friends, and Community,

On this date, my wishes for your and your family’s health cannot be made more sincere than on this first anniversary of the shooting at Walmart. We can hardly be more aware of the important of health and life than on this date. It is with this backdrop that I sent out these ongoing and developing guidelines for our schools return for the 2020-2021 school year.

Last spring, all El Paso Catholic schools scheduled the beginning of the school year with face-to-face instruction on August 10. Since then, the very able and dedicated administrators of the 11 (three secondary and nine elementary) schools have been meeting weekly to plan for the new year, keeping in mind COVID-19 developments and best practices. Recently due to the current increase in COVID-19 diagnoses, the El Paso Department of Health asked that all area schools postpone on-campus instruction until after Labor Day. In broad consultation, the diocesan schools decided to join the local educational community in moving our first day of on-campus instruction to Sept. 8, which includes those students on campus and any student who may require remote campus-based instruction. Our Catholic schools will take this additional time to prepare with extra professional development (COVID-19 protocols, curriculum, technology, and instructional methodology). Also during that time, some schools will be offering their students virtual academic learning. Some schools will also offer student/parents prayer and orientations to this year’s new health procedures. We are planning so each student can begin this year prepared, safe, and ready for learning.

As a diocese, we will be using the Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops’ ***Interim Fall Guidance for Reopening Plan*** as a benchmark plan. Along with other national, state (TEA) and local resources, the schools are studying these sources to write practices specific to their own students, staff, or campus. Our strategy for a safe return to campus hinges on two principles: small groups (cohorts) and hygiene. With appropriate social distancing, we plan to keep students in groups as small as possible to safeguard against possible general contamination. Concerning hygiene, we will be paying close attention to campus sanitation, disinfecting procedures, interpersonal precautions, airflow, and ventilation. We will have new procedures for student drop-off and pickup, health screening, limited access to the school building, and new types of school supplies (for example, sanitizer, Kleenex, and a water bottle).

Other differences will include maintaining social distancing, wearing of face masks, increasing procedures of disinfection, staggering bathroom use, implementing some special class schedules, restricting large group assemblies, adapting the use of drinking fountains and eating areas, and closely monitoring our community’s health, temperatures, and any contact with individuals with COVID-19 or symptoms. Individual schools may have other special adaptations based on their students’ ages, numbers, curricula, and staff.

The Catholic Schools Office will continue to monitor closely the pandemic's course. While remaining responsive to the developing public health situation, our goal remains to assist all El Paso Catholic school students to prepare for another spiritually and academically enriching year. The health and safety of our school community is of utmost importance. I will provide updates and further communication as conditions develop. Please keep our community in prayer for health and for a swift end to this health challenge.

May God bless you abundantly,

Lanny K. Hollis, PhD
Superintendent of Catholic Schools

QUESTION & ANSWERS FOR THE RETURN TO EL PASO CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Q: WHAT DOES “REOPENING OUR SCHOOLS” REALLY MEAN?

A: Gathering as a faith and school community is an integral part of Catholic education. Our plan is to reopen our school buildings to students this fall. This means that all students are welcome to return to classes for face-to-face instruction and community. We have developed a plan that addresses numerous aspects of the reopening process, and how schools will function once reopened.

Q: WILL STUDENTS BE SAFE WHEN SCHOOL IS REOPENED?

A: Safety is always a foundational priority in Catholic schools. In constructing our reopening plan, we have closely studied and are implementing guidance from educators and medical professionals, as well as federal and state authorities.

Q: WHO DECIDES WHEN A SCHOOL HAS MET THE REQUIREMENTS TO REOPEN? WHEN WILL THIS HAPPEN?

A: Our plan includes specific requirements that schools must meet in order to reopen. Targeting safety, health, and academic excellence, the Diocese of El Paso has worked with all Catholic schools to open in the fall. After much consultation, our original face-to-face reopening date of August 10 was reconsidered after the recommendation of our local health officials and the opportunity to further prepare for our students’ instruction, learning, and safety. Our schools decided to follow the area’s return to campuses after Labor Day. All Catholic schools have scheduled their return-to-campus date for September 8. Depending on individual circumstances, some schools have decided to offer some virtual instruction and/or orientation to return-to-school practices prior to that date.

Q: WILL THE CHANGE OF THE ON-CAMPUS START DATE CHANGE THE SCHOOL’S CALENDAR OR VACATION DATES?

A: Yes. Academic accreditation agencies require 180 days of instruction. Each school has looked at its calendar to provide the required time in class along with rigorous instruction. Schools have adjusted the scheduling to best fit their campus needs. There may be a variety of on-line learning accompanying traditional days at school or at home to shorten the length of the year.

Q: WILL STUDENTS AND STAFF NEED TO WEAR MASKS AT SCHOOL?

A: Yes. Our diocesan recommendation is that all students wear masks while at school. Masks may be removed for brief periods of time under certain circumstances, e.g., eating lunch. If masks are removed, however, students must remain physically distant from one another. As research continues to guide best practices, there may be some adaptations, e.g., limited use of masks for younger children.

Q: DO I NEED TO PURCHASE MASKS FOR MY CHILD?

A: Yes. We are asking all parents to purchase masks for their child. Parents may opt to buy disposable or reusable masks. For disposable masks, each mask must be thrown away at the end of every school day. Reusable masks must be cleaned after every use and students should bring at least one extra mask to school. Please refer to your individual school’s policy regarding the purchasing of masks or replacements.

Q: CAN FACE SHIELDS BE USED INSTEAD OF MASKS?

A: No. At this time, we do not have clear guidance from the health agencies. We will continue to monitor this issue and share news as it becomes available. Face shields must be worn with mouth-and-nose masks.

Q: WILL TEACHERS TEACH CHILDREN HOW TO USE MASKS?

A: Yes. We know that students will need training to learn how to properly wear and remove masks. We will spend time at the beginning of the year helping children learn how to safely keep masks in place. You can help with this at home by practicing with your child.

Q: WILL STUDENTS BE REQUIRED TO PHYSICALLY DISTANCE AT SCHOOL?

A: Yes. When students are with their class or cohort, they are to remain as far apart (maintaining the 6-foot standard) as feasible.

Q: SHOULD I TAKE MY CHILD’S TEMPERATURE EVERY DAY BEFORE SCHOOL?

A: Yes. A high fever is a key symptom of COVID-19. Parents should take their child’s temperature every day before their child is taken to school. If your child has a fever of 100.0°F or higher, your child is to be kept home from school. You are to contact your child’s doctor and the school’s main office. Similarly, you should ask your child if he/she has any of the other symptoms (e.g., loss of taste or smell; cough; difficulty breathing; shortness of breath; headache; chills; sore throat; shaking or shivering; significant muscle pain or ache; or diarrhea—see page 13) of COVID-19. If your child complains of these symptoms, you must keep him/her home and contact your doctor and the school office. If students show signs of COVID-19 symptoms at school, a parent will be contacted to come pick them up immediately. At this time, most of our schools have decided to take student temperatures when they arrive at entrance sites.

Q: HOW WILL DROP OFF AND PICK-UP BE HANDLED?

A: Each school has carefully evaluated drop-off and pick-up procedures. Schools will use various entrances and exits to minimize contact between student cohorts. Parents will be asked not to congregate near school doors. The school administration will communicate specific drop off and pick up procedures before the start of school. In addition, when students enter school every day, they will be asked to participate in two tasks. Specifically:

1. Students will immediately wash their hands with soap or use hand sanitizer.
2. Students will be asked if they are feeling well. Other procedures may also be asked as determined by each school, e.g., an additional temperature-taking.

Q: WHAT ARE THE PLANS ABOUT SAFETY AND CLEANLINESS REQUIREMENTS FOR SCHOOL BUILDINGS?

A: Our plan includes very specific requirements for the ongoing cleaning and disinfecting of school buildings. Generally speaking, buildings will be cleaned and disinfected regularly and frequently, with a particular focus on high-traffic areas and common surfaces. Open windows and/or vent usage will increase needed air flow.

Q: HOW WILL LUNCH TAKE PLACE WHEN SCHOOL REOPENS FACE TO FACE?

A: If cafeterias are used and six feet of distance between students is not possible, meal times will be staggered and/or physical barriers will be used. Serving and cafeteria staff will use barrier protection, gloves, face shields, and face masks. Classrooms or outdoor areas can be used for students to eat meals at school as deemed safe by the administration.

Q: WHAT ABOUT RECESS?

A: Schools may still conduct recess, but each school must fulfill defined safety requirements and sanitation.

Q: CAN I STILL COME TO SCHOOL TO VOLUNTEER OR BE WITH MY CHILD FOR CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES?

A: As we reopen our focus is on the health and safety of our students, faculty and staff. For the most part, parents, volunteers, and visitors will have very limited access to school. For now, most schools will not have on-site volunteers.

Q: WILL EXTENDED CARE (BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL) BE AVAILABLE THIS YEAR?

A: Schools are seeking to continue to offer extended care. Please consult your individual school.

Q: MY CHILD AND/OR ANOTHER MEMBER OF MY HOUSEHOLD IS IN AN AT-RISK GROUP FOR COVID-19. SHOULD I SEND MY CHILD TO SCHOOL?

A: The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has defined conditions in which certain people may be more at risk for severe illness from COVID-19. The Center has produced an excellent video (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-at-increased-risk.html>). If your child or another member of your household is in an at-risk group, we encourage you to speak to your doctor. Ultimately you should decide whether it is safe for your child to attend school.

Q: IS IT OKAY FOR MY FAMILY TO TRAVEL OUT OF STATE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC?

A: We recommend that family members not to travel widely during the current pandemic. If travel is necessary, however, we encourage you to become familiar with the CDC’s Travel Guidelines. Traveling to COVID-19 surge/hot spot locations may require a quarantine of the traveler and/or members of the family for 14 days. Please consult your school.

Q: WHAT HAPPENS IF THERE IS A COVID-19 SURGE IN OUR STATE AND THE STATE IMPOSES MORE RESTRICTIONS ON SCHOOLS?

A: If a COVID-19 surge occurs, we will work closely with State officials to determine whether we can continue face-to-face instruction. If necessary, we will return to at-home virtual instruction.

INFECTION PROTOCOLS

Q: WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19?

A: The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has identified symptoms of COVID-19, including high fever (above 100.0°F as stipulated by Diocesan/TCCB guidelines), new or unusual sore throat, coughing, nausea, headache, muscle aches, loss of taste or smell, runny nose, fatigue, diarrhea and difficulty breathing (The CDC reference is at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html> and page 13).

Q: WHAT SHOULD I DO IF MY CHILD HAS SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19?

A: If your child shows new or unusual symptoms of COVID-19, keep your child at home and contact your physician immediately. Your doctor may ask that your child take a COVID-19 test. You also must alert your school’s main office. If the symptoms occur during school, your child will be immediately sent to a quarantine area and you will be contacted to pick up your child. Any student in quarantine is able to participate in class-based remote instruction with his/her teachers as soon as feasible.



Q: MY CHILD HAD COVID-19-LIKE SYMPTOMS, BUT TESTED NEGATIVE FOR COVID-19. WHEN CAN HE/SHE RETURN TO SCHOOL?

A: If your child does not have COVID-19 but has another illness, please keep your child home until they are symptom free for at least 24 hours without a temperature being controlled by medication.

Q: WHAT SHOULD I DO IF MY CHILD TESTS POSITIVE FOR COVID-19?

A: Immediately contact your doctor for additional instructions. You must also contact your school’s main office and they will contact the local health department. Do not send your child to school. Any student in quarantine is able to participate in class-based remote instruction with his/her teachers as soon as feasible.

Q: WHEN CAN A STUDENT RETURN TO SCHOOL AFTER RECEIVING A POSITIVE COVID-19 TEST?

A: If a student tests positive for COVID-19, the student must isolate and not return to school until they have met CDC’s criteria to cease home isolation (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/disposition-in-home-patients.html>). This includes:

1. Three or more days without a high fever not controlled by medicine;
2. A reduction of other COVID symptoms by at least 75 percent; and
3. At least 14 days having passed since symptoms first appeared.

Q: WHAT SHOULD I DO IF A MEMBER OF MY HOUSEHOLD TESTS POSITIVE FOR COVID-19?

A: Immediately contact your school’s main office. Your school will contact the local health department and they will provide you specific instructions on how long your child should be kept home.

Q: WHAT HAPPENS IF MY CHILD’S TEACHER TESTS POSITIVE FOR COVID-19?

A: If any school employee has COVID-19 symptoms or a positive test, we will follow the same protocols used for students and make all families aware that a teacher has tested positive. All students taught by that teacher will be closely monitored for COVID-19 symptoms and schools will follow local health department guidance as related to “close contacts” (and likelihood of a transmission of an infectious secretion).

Q: WHAT HAPPENS IF ANOTHER STUDENT IN MY CHILD’S CLASS TESTS POSITIVE FOR COVID-19?

A: Schools will follow the same protocols used for teachers, making all families aware of positive test(s). Schools will follow local health department guidance.

Q: COULD MY CHILD’S SCHOOL BUILDING BE CLOSED DOWN DUE TO COVID-19 THIS YEAR?

A: Yes. Schools are implementing protocols and procedures to create a safe and healthy environment in the coming year. If numerous cases appear in a single school resulting in the isolation of multiple classes/cohorts, however, we may need to close the school building and transition all students to virtual learning for a time. Parents will be updated regularly should that need arise. Schools will follow local health department guidance.



CLASSROOM AND ACADEMICS

Q: WILL MY CHILD'S CURRICULUM BE CHANGED THIS YEAR?

A: Possibly. Schools will still deliver high-quality instruction in core subjects (religion, language arts, math, science and, social studies). Non-core classes will continue within recommendations and procedures as advised by national and State guidelines, e.g., gym, music. The implementation of safety and health requirements will create new complexities in instruction, but our commitment remains to provide each child the best possible faith-based education.

Q: WILL STUDENTS STILL BE ON TRACK FOR PROMOTION OR GRADUATION?

A: Yes. Administrators on all grade levels are working hard to assure that all State and accreditation requirements are met. In order to assure that all academic criteria and learning standards are attained, school calendars and instructional methods are being adjusted at the local level. Additionally, some online and/or home assignments may be given to assure that students excel in knowledge and meet stipulated instructional hours.

Q: WILL MY CHILD'S CLASSROOM LOOK DIFFERENT?

A: Yes. Schools have spread out desks and tables in classrooms as much as possible. In order to maximize floor space, teachers have removed non-essential furniture and other items. We have also asked that desks and tables be arranged so that they face the front of the room. These steps were taken to minimize risk of infection in the classroom.

Q: WILL STUDENTS SHARE SCHOOL SUPPLIES?

A: No. Students may not share school supplies (e.g., books, crayons, pens, pencils, etc.), e.g., art and/or music. Exceptions may be made for activities outdoors (such as outdoor physical education classes where disinfecting will take place after sessions). If it is impossible to avoid sharing supplies, such as computers in a computer lab, items will be cleaned after every use.

Q: WILL STUDENTS CHANGE CLASSES?

A: Many schools plan to offer departmentalization and cohort groups. If students change classrooms, desks and shared equipment will be cleaned and disinfected after every cohort. Students will wear masks and keep appropriate distances when passing in hallways.

Q: WILL STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN FIELD TRIPS?

A: No. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, schools will not participate in in-person field trips until further notice. The schools will follow the guidance of health professionals on the feasibility of field trips.

Q: I NEED TO MEET WITH A TEACHER OR MY SCHOOL PRINCIPAL, CAN THESE MEETINGS OCCUR?

A: Yes. These meetings can take place via phone or video chat.

Q: WILL SCHOOL MASSES STILL TAKE PLACE?

A: Yes. The diocese has defined a specific plan for parishes that allows for the celebration of Mass under very specific conditions. Schools will be asked to follow that plan, in close coordination with the local pastor and parish, in determining how/whether/when Masses will be celebrated.

Q: HOW WILL EXTRA/CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES BE IMPACTED THIS YEAR?

A: Our plans provide guidance on specific extra/co-curricular activities. Concerning athletics, we are awaiting further information from the state regarding athletics. More information will be provided to parents as it is known. Concerning other clubs, plays, and programs, schools will meet specific health and safety requirements. If such requirements cannot be met, these activities are to be conducted virtually or canceled.

TUITION AND FEES

Q: WILL SCHOOLS STILL COLLECT TUITION THIS YEAR?

A: Yes. While the beginning of the school year may look different, our schools will continue to provide a rigorous academic experience while supporting the moral and spiritual development of each student. Our Catholic schools depend upon tuition revenue to pay our employees and to support school-related expenses. Tuition, budgets, employment contracts, etc., are based the calendar year. Schools do not have the possibility to prorate expenses/tuition based monthly or weekly variations.

Q: I AM HAVING DIFFICULTY PAYING TUITION BECAUSE MY OWN WORKPLACE HAS BEEN IMPACTED BY COVID-19, WHAT DO I DO?

A: We know that some families may have difficulties paying tuition due to the loss of pay during workplace closures. If this is happening to you, please contact your school’s principal. We understand your situation and will do our very best to work with you.

Q: WILL FEES BE CHANGED THIS YEAR?

A: Each school develops their own fee schedules based upon their own local needs. Fees may be adjusted if a program or activity has been directly impacted by COVID-19—for example, if a fee is collected for a particular field trip, it is likely that the fee will not be collected this year as field trips will not occur.

DISTANCE LEARNING RECOMMENDATIONS

Q: IS EACH SCHOOL IN THE DIOCESE REQUIRED TO FOLLOW THE DISTANCE LEARNING RECOMMENDATIONS?

A: Schools in the diocese have been instructed to review distance learning recommendations with their leadership and governance teams to align their school-level plans as much as possible to the recommendations.



Q: IS THERE AN OPTION FOR ONLINE LEARNING IN THE EVENT A FAMILY DOES NOT WISH TO SEND THEIR CHILD TO SCHOOL?

A: At this time, all schools in the diocese have planned to include such families (especially those with immuno-compromised individuals) in remote participation in the ongoing face-to-face classroom instruction. That is our goal so that students can integrate back into the classroom once the health situation lessens. Individual schools have set up their policies and procedures.

“Rediscover the Treasure of a Catholic School Education”: 2020 Fall Return-to-School Guidance, Diocese of El Paso

Purpose

This guidance document is intended to assist the Catholic Schools in El Paso, Texas to reopen during the 2020-2021 academic school year during the COVID-19 pandemic. This document was prepared using the Texas Education Agency (TEA) materials, including the agency document on *SY 20-21 Public Health Planning Guidance*, and TCCB’s Education Department’s *Interim Fall Guidance for Reopening and Remote Synchronous and Asynchronous Instruction July 9, 2020*. Both sources were based on CDC guidelines.

This guidance document is based on the ongoing review of the superintendent, legal counsel, educators, health professionals, school leadership or governance, and other relevant persons. It is meant to service in conjunction with other diocesan policies and procedures. Additionally, this guidance document is being provided based on the public health situation as we understand it today and is intended to support Catholic schools in planning for 2020-2021 activities and instruction beginning in the fall of 2020. Changes to the public health situation over the course of the year may necessitate changes to this guidance, including additional restrictions to school operations.

Please note this guidance cannot anticipate every unique situation. Catholic schools will stay informed and take actions based on common sense and wise judgment that will protect health and further their faith and educational mission. In this respect, Catholic schools should be mindful of applicable federal, State, and local laws and regulations, workplace safety standards, and health standards, including the latest “CDC Guidance for Schools,” to address the needs of both students and employees.

Public Health Considerations

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 the community safe. That said, research from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), among others, has found that while children do get infected by COVID-19 and some severe outcomes have been reported in children, fewer children with COVID-19 are hospitalized or have severe symptoms.

Nevertheless, a child with a mild or even asymptomatic case of COVID-19 can spread the infection to others. The same is true for adults. Even if an infected person is only mildly ill, the people they spread it to may become seriously ill or even die, especially if that person is older or has preexisting health conditions that place them at higher risk. The diocese wishes to be very prudent in the care of our schools’ senior staff, whose years of experience the virus appears to target.

While it is not possible to eliminate all risk of furthering the spread of COVID-19, current science suggests there are many steps schools can take to reduce the risks to students, teachers, staff, and their families significantly. This guidance document contains information on four sets of practices to minimize the likelihood of viral spread: Some of which are school requirements, and others are recommendations. The practices categories are:

- **PROVIDE NOTICE:** Requirements for parental and public notices;
- **PREVENT:** Recommended practices to prevent the virus from entering the school;
- **RESPOND:** Required practices to respond to a lab-confirmed case in the school; and
- **MITIGATE:** Recommended practices to mitigate the virus spread inside the school.

The prevention and mitigation practices recommended in this document are designed to significantly reduce the likelihood that a coronavirus outbreak occurs on campus. Catholic schools will take their local public health context into account throughout the year as they determine which of the prevention and mitigation recommendations they implement. Additionally, Catholic schools should consider stringently applying prevention and mitigation recommendations to adults on campuses, even when it might not be feasible to do so for students. Consistently implementing recommendations to the extent feasible is the best way to reduce the potential negative impact of infection on our school communities.

There may be situations that necessitate temporary school closure due to positive COVID-19 cases in schools. Parents, educators, and school administrators should be prepared for this in the event that it occurs, while actively working to prevent it through prevention and mitigation practices.

PROVIDE NOTICE: Provide Parental and Public Notices

Developing a Plan for On-Campus Activities and Instruction

One week prior to the start of on campus instruction, Catholic schools will post for parents and families a summary of the plan they will follow to mitigate COVID-19 spread in their schools based on the requirements and recommendations outlined here. This summary document can follow any format the Catholic school deems appropriate to communicate the information, should broadly address the major points in this guidance, and must be posted on the school homepage or another easily found area on the website. Neither this summary document nor any Catholic school's reopening plans are subject to approval by any government entity. However, each school accredited by the TCCB ED must submit their plan to their diocesan superintendent and TCCB ED no later than October 1, 2020. It is recommended that schools designate a staff person (or group) that is responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns. That person (with contact information) will be clearly identified to all staff and student families.

PREVENT: Practices to Prevent the Virus from Entering the School

Screening Questions for COVID-19 Before Campus Access

1. Catholic schools should require all school personnel to self-screen for COVID-19 symptoms before coming onto campus each day including taking their own temperature. Symptoms are listed below. School personnel should not report to the Catholic school if: (a) they have come into "close contact" (see definition) with an individual who is lab-confirmed with COVID-19; or (b) they themselves have COVID-19 symptoms.
2. Catholic schools should 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.
3. 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.
4. Catholic schools are permitted to prevent any individual who fails the screening criteria from being admitted to the campus or school transport until they meet any of the criteria for re-entry to the campus, as described below. Refusal to participate in screening and/or school protocols is grounds for denying admittance to an adult, student, or family.

Individuals Confirmed, Suspected, or Exposed to COVID-19

1. Any individuals (including teachers, staff, students, volunteers or other campus visitors) who has a lab-confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19 or is experiencing COVID-19 symptoms (e.g., fever greater or equal to 100.0 degrees; loss of taste or smell; cough; difficulty breathing; shortness of breath; headache; chills; sore throat; shaking or shivering; significant muscle pain or ache; or diarrhea—see page 13) must stay at home throughout the infection period. They cannot return to campus until the school screens the individual to determine any of the below conditions for campus re-entry have been met:
 - a) 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 significantly improved symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath); and
 - At least ten days have passed since symptoms first appeared.
 - b) 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 an 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 criteria listed above.
 - c) 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 Texas-licensed medical doctor’s 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 an acute infection tests at an approved COVID-19 testing location found at <https://tdem.texas.gov/covid-19/>.
2. Individuals (including students, teachers, staff, volunteers or other campus visitors), who have had “close contact” (see definition) 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 home through the 14-day incubation period and should not be allowed on campus.
3. Catholic schools should screen individuals after the incubation period has concluded. 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.

Identifying Possible COVID-19 Cases on Campus

1. 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 as soon as is feasible.
2. Students who report feeling feverish should be given an immediate temperature check to determine if they are symptomatic for COVID-19.



RESPOND: Required Practices to Respond to a Lab-Confirmed Case in the School

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

1. If an individual who has been in a school is lab-confirmed to have COVID-19, the school must notify the diocesan superintendent and its local health department in accordance with applicable federal, state and local laws and regulations. Other Prevent Criteria also may apply.
2. Schools must close off areas that were used by the individual with the lab-confirmed case until the non-porous surfaces in those areas can be disinfected, unless more than three days have already passed since that person was on campus.
3. Consistent with diocesan and school notification requirements for other communicable diseases, and consistent with legal confidentiality requirements, the school 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

1. Schools should have hand sanitizer or hand washing stations with soap and water at each entrance. They should provide hand sanitizer or hand washing stations with soap and water in every classroom.
2. Students, teachers, staff, and campus visitors should to sanitize and/or wash hands frequently.
 - a) Catholic schools will have students engage in handwashing for at least 20 seconds at least two times each day, in addition to washing hands after using the restroom and before eating. Schools are planning for the best systems for dispensing soap and drying hands.
 - b) Catholic schools will teach students good handwashing techniques.
 - c) 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, and hands should be washed immediately with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or hand sanitizer should be used.
3. 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.
 - a) 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.
 - b) 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.
 - c) Schools should 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.
4. Whenever possible, schools should open windows or otherwise work to improve air flow by allowing outside air to circulate in the building.
5. 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 should use these or create their own reminders.

6. On the first day—or prior to the beginning—of school, Catholic schools must provide instruction to students on appropriate hygiene practices consistent with the mitigation practices adopted by that school. This instruction should be reinforced and repeated throughout the pandemic.

Masks and Face Shields

1. For the purposes of this document, masks include non-medical grade disposable face masks, cloth face coverings (over the nose and mouth), or full-face shields to protect eyes, nose, and mouth.
2. Schools must follow diocesan, State and/or local face covering requirements. Consistent with the actions taken by many organizations across the state, all employees and visitors should wear face masks. This could be especially important where people congregate in relatively close settings, e.g., staff meetings, break rooms, or where visitors congregate.
3. Similarly, consider having students for whom it is developmentally appropriate wear masks or face shields at times when they will be in close proximity to other students for an extended period (i.e., when they would otherwise meet the definition of a “close contact” (with the likeliness of shared infectious secretions).
4. Young children and persons may be unable to adjust or remove masks. They may not be regarded as suitable candidates for wearing masks or face shields. Consider the following:
 - a) It may not be developmentally appropriate for students in kindergarten and below to wear masks.
 - b) It may not be developmentally appropriate for some students to always wear the face mask, e.g., those who are very young or who have identified disabilities.
 - c) For students in first grade and above, the determination of whether wearing a mask is developmentally appropriate is up to the school administration in consultation with the student’s parent or guardian.

Student-Teacher Groupings

Where feasible without disrupting the educational experience, students should practice social distancing.

1. In classroom spaces that allow it, place student desks a minimum of six feet apart when possible.
2. In classrooms where students are regularly within six feet of one another, schools should plan for more frequent hand washing and/or hand sanitizing and should consider whether increased airflow from the outdoors is possible.

Use of Non-Classroom Spaces

1. 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 the reduced risk of virus spread outdoors.
2. Campuses should plan for entry, exit, and transition procedures that reduce large group gatherings in close proximity. Consider staggering school start and end times, assigning students to entries to ensure the 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 student drop-off and pick-up.
4. Catholic schools should consider practices that reduce the likelihood that students meet the “close contact” definition (defined below with likeliness of infectious secretions) 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. To a **lesser** degree, schools may use dividers on cafeteria tables if they can serve the purpose of shielding the students from respiratory droplets. For meal service itself, consider individually plated or boxed meals with disposable food service items for students who do not bring their own lunch.

Transportation Recommendations

1. When any of our schools offering transportation, schools should require students and staff to use hand sanitizer upon boarding. If students need to sit in close proximity, all student should wear face masks. When possible, windows should be opened to allow outside air to circulate. After any use, buses should be thoroughly cleaned after each 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.
2. Otherwise, Catholic schools should encourage families to drop students off, or walk with students to school to reduce possible virus exposure on buses.
3. Carpooling is discouraged unless strict hygiene protocols can be established and maintained.



Visitors to Schools

1. Catholic schools should, however, restrict visits in schools to only those essential to school operations.
2. At this time, parents and other adults may visit schools on under extraordinary circumstances, as permitted by the school's policies. During these visits, parents and other visitors must follow the school's virus prevention and mitigation requirements.

Staffing

1. Employees of Catholic schools, like employees of any organization, must continue to meet the work expectations set by their employers, which is subject to any applicable employment contract terms.
2. 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.
3. Catholic schools should attempt to reduce in-person staff meetings or other occasions when adults congregate in close settings. When those meetings are necessary, masks are required, and schools should also consider increased airflow from the outdoors.

COVID-19 Symptoms

In evaluating whether an individual has symptoms consistent with COVID-19, consider the following questions: Have they recently begun experiencing any of the following in a way that is not normal for them?

- | | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| a) Feeling feverish or a measured temperature greater than or equal to 100.0° F | f) Fatigue | l) Significant muscle pain or ache |
| b) Loss of taste or smell | g) Headache | m) Diarrhea |
| c) Cough | h) Chills | n) Nausea or vomiting |
| d) Difficulty breathing | i) Sore throat | |
| e) Shortness of breath | j) Congestion or runny nose | |
| | k) Shaking or exaggerated shivering | |

(NB: TEA list of symptoms increased by three on 8.4.20.)

“Close Contact”

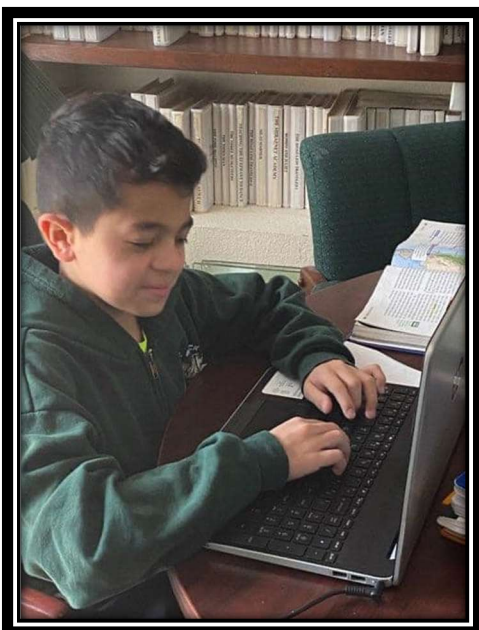
This document refers to “close contact” with any individual who is lab-confirmed to have COVID-19. At this time, “close contact” is defined as:

- a. Being directly exposed to infectious secretions (e.g., being coughed on while not wearing a mask or face shield); or
- b. Being within 6 feet for a cumulative duration of 15 minutes, while not wearing a mask or face shield; if either occurred at any time in the last 14 days at the same time the infected individual was infectious.

Individuals are presumed infectious at least two days prior to symptom onset or, in the case of asymptomatic individuals who are lab-confirmed with COVID-19, two days prior to the confirming lab test. Determinations are made in consultations with the local health authority.

Screening Questionnaire Information

1. 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 symptomatic.
2. All school personnel should report to the school administrator if either:
 - a. They have had contact or “close contact” with an individual who is lab-confirmed with COVID-19; or
 - b. They themselves have COVID-19 symptoms.
3. 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.



Diocese of El Paso Return-to-School Recommendations Summary

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

- All staff will wear facial coverings when in classrooms, except during meals.
- All staff and all students will wear facial coverings when in indoor hallways and common areas, except during meals.
- Schools will greatly limit any indoor assemblies that bring together students from more than one classroom.
- Where applicable for school transportation, all passengers and drivers will wear facial coverings.
- School Masses may be allowed provided that all Diocesan Mass guidelines are followed.
- Facial coverings may be homemade or be disposable level one/basic-grade surgical masks.

HYGIENE—Schools will:

- Provide adequate supplies to support healthy hygiene behaviors (including soap, hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol for safe use by staff and students, paper towels, tissues, and signs reinforcing proper handwashing techniques).
- Teach and reinforce handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and/or the use of hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Educate staff and students on how to cough and sneeze into their elbows, or to cover with a tissue. Used tissues should be thrown in the trash and hands washed immediately using proper hand hygiene techniques.
- Systematically and frequently check and refill soap and hand sanitizers.
- Provide daily opportunities for handwashing with soap and water by students and teachers.
- Assure that there is no sharing of personal items and supplies.

SPACING, MOVEMENT, AND ACCESS—Schools will:

- Space students as far apart as feasible in classrooms.
- Post signage to indicate proper social distancing.
- Place markers at six-foot intervals where line formation is anticipated.
- Provide social distancing markers in waiting and reception areas.

- Post signs on the doors of restrooms to indicate proper social distancing and hand hygiene techniques.
- Limit the entrance to the school to students and staff. Family members or other non-staff adults are not allowed in the school building except under extenuating circumstances as determined by school officials. All non-staff adults entering the building must be screened for symptoms using a monitoring form, wear a facial covering, and wash/sanitize hands prior to entering. Temperatures may also be taken at this time. Strict records, including date and time, should be kept of all non-staff adults entering and exiting the building.

SCREENING STUDENTS AND STAFF

- Schools will identify and designate a quarantine area and a staff person to care for students and staff who develop symptoms of COVID-19 at school.
- Students and staff who become ill with symptoms of COVID-19 will be placed in a quarantine area with a facial covering in place until they can be picked up. Identified person caring for these children/staff will wear a facial covering.
- Symptomatic students and staff sent home from school will stay home until they have tested negative or have completely recovered according to CDC and diocesan guidelines.
- Prior to coming to work, staff will conduct daily self-examinations, including a temperature check. If they exhibit any new or unusual symptoms as reported on the COVID-19 school monitoring form, they will stay home. Staff members will inform the school principal.

TESTING PROTOCOLS FOR STUDENTS AND STAFF AND RESPONDING TO POSITIVE CASES

- Schools will cooperate with the local public health department and CDC guidelines regarding implementing protocols for screening students and staff.
- Symptomatic students and staff will remain home until they have tested negative for COVID-19 or have been released from isolation protocols according to CDC guidelines.
- 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.

RESPONDING TO POSITIVE TESTS AMONG STAFF AND STUDENTS

- Schools will cooperate with the local public health department if a confirmed case of COVID-19 is identified, and in particular, collect the contact information for any close contacts of the affected individual from two days before he or she showed symptoms to the time when he or she was last present at the school. The local health department will initiate contact tracing, following regular public health practice.

- Schools will notify the diocese, local health officials, staff, and students immediately of any possible case of COVID-19 while maintaining confidentiality consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other applicable federal and State privacy laws.

FOOD SERVICE, GATHERING, AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

- Schools will prohibit indoor assemblies that bring together students from more than one classroom. School Masses may be allowed provided that all diocesan Mass guidelines are followed.
- If cafeterias are used and six feet of distance between students is not possible, meal times should be staggered or physical barriers should be used. Students should wear masks during pass time. Cafeteria staff will use gloves, face shields, and surgical masks.
- Classrooms or outdoor areas can be used for students to eat meals at school.

ATHLETICS

- Schools will comply with all guidance published by State and the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS).
- Students, teachers, and staff must use proper hand hygiene techniques before and after every practice, event, or other gathering.
- Every participant should confirm that they are healthy and without any symptoms prior to any practice or event. On non-school days, a *Monitoring Form* for COVID-19 symptoms needs to be completed by all participants (this includes all adult volunteers, coaches and administrators)
- All equipment must be disinfected before and after use.
- Each participant must use a clearly marked water bottle for only individual use. There should be no sharing of this equipment.
- Handshakes, fist bumps, and other unnecessary contact must not occur.
- At this time, indoor weight rooms and physical conditioning activities that require shared equipment should be suspended. Outdoor physical conditioning activities are allowed while maintaining social distancing.
- At this time, large indoor spectator events are suspended. Large scale outdoor spectator or stadium events are limited to 100 people, and people not part of the same household must maintain six feet of distance from one another. Spectators are allowed provided that facial coverings are used by observers and six feet of social distancing can be maintained at all times. Attention must be given to entry and exit points to prevent crowding.

CLEANING

- Frequently touched surfaces (e.g., light switches, doors, benches, bathrooms) will undergo cleaning at least every four hours with either an EPA-approved disinfectant or diluted bleach solution.
- Libraries, computer labs, arts, and other hands-on classrooms will undergo cleaning after every class period or when cohorts change classrooms, with either an EPA-approved disinfectant or diluted bleach solution.
- Student desks will be wiped down with either an EPA-approved disinfectant or diluted bleach solution after every class period, or when cohorts change classrooms.
- Playground structures will continue to undergo normal routine cleaning.
- Schools will ensure safe and correct use and storage of cleaning and disinfection products, including storing products securely away from students and with adequate ventilation when staff use these products.
- Staff must wear gloves, surgical masks, and face shields when performing all cleaning activities.



BUSING AND STUDENT TRANSPORTATION (INCLUDING EXTRA/CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES AND ATHLETICS)

Where applicable, the following is intended for schools who are the direct provider of busing services, e.g., for sports.

- Schools will require the use of hand sanitizer before entering a school bus. Hand sanitizer will be supplied on the bus.
- The bus driver, staff, and all students in grades pre-K-12, should wear facial coverings while on the bus. (Note: There may be situations where it is not safe for the bus driver to wear a facial covering. Decisions about these situations should be made on a case-by-case basis with local public health officials.) School staff will clean and disinfect transportation vehicles before and after use.

- School staff will clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces in the vehicle (e.g., surfaces in the driver’s area, hard seats, arm rests, door handles, seat belt buckles, light and air controls, doors and windows, and grab handles) prior to uses.
- Schools will create a plan for getting local and international students home safely if they are not allowed to board school transit or share vehicles.
- If a student becomes sick during the day, they will not use group transportation or carpools to return home.

AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMMING

- All criteria above should remain inforce for any after-school programs.

MENTAL & SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL HEALTH

- Schools are to identify a point person to facilitate mental health referrals, communications to families/students, and wellness instructional materials.
- Schools will provide all staff with timely, responsive, and ongoing training/professional development.



TCCB ED Interim Fall Guidance for Remote Synchronous and Asynchronous Instruction Types

Attendance

1. Per TCCB educational 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 both types remote instruction.
2. Catholic schools should allow parents to request that their student be offered classroom-based virtual instruction if the school is able to offer such instruction.
3. Catholic schools should notify parents of any changes to the school's policy regarding attendance during the COVID-19 pandemic.

TCCB ED minimum number of daily instructional minutes are required: Daily instructional minutes need not be consecutive. They should meet a total of:

- a) PK - 2nd grade –180 instructional minutes;
- b) 3rd through 5th grade – 180 instructional minutes; and
- c) 6th through 12th grade – 240 instructional minutes.

Remote Synchronous and/or Asynchronous Instruction Types (TCCB)

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. Instruction should:

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

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 has scheduled synchronous instruction for 120 minutes in the morning, then releases students to work independently for several hours before a second scheduled synchronous session, which totals 120 minutes meeting the 240 total daily instructional minute requirement. Note the following:

- a) 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
- b) 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.

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.

This 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, or 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 a combination of asynchronous and synchronous instruction together. Asynchronous instruction does not require all participants to be virtually present at the same time, e.g., live interactive classes with students & teachers participating real time, teacher supported work time on video conference calls, scheduled and timed online tests.

Asynchronous educational plans should address four key requirements:

1. **Instructional Schedule:** Expectations for when and in what setting students are learning, loosely equivalent to an on-campus instructional day.
2. **Material Design:** Curriculum should be designed for asynchronous student learning.
3. **Student Progress:** Daily student progress is defined and measured.
4. **Implementation:** The Catholic school must provide educators with support to provide remote instruction. Additionally,
 - a. Remote plans should be posted online for parents to see;
 - b. Remote plans may include differentiation by grade and subject;
 - c. There should be only one remote plan per Catholic school; and
 - d. All school-wide plans must be reviewed and approved by the superintendent.

Teacher Preparation to Deliver Remote Synchronous Instruction—Schools will:

- a) Ensure teachers are trained to deliver remote instruction on the school’s chosen platform;
- b) Ensure teachers have practiced delivering a synchronous instruction lesson; and
- c) Ensure there is tech support available to troubleshoot student access issues.



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.

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RESOURCES

GENERAL

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): Coronavirus (COVID-19)

<http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV>

State of Michigan: COVID-19 response

https://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-37818_53456---,00.html

CDC: Resources for Childcare, Schools, and Youth Programs

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

Federal OSHA

www.osha.gov

HYGIENE

Handwashing video translated into multiple languages

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LdQuPGVcceg>

CDC Prevention

<http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>

CDC Hygiene Etiquette

http://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/hygiene/etiquette/coughing_sneezing.html

HOUSEKEEPING

CDC Disinfecting

<http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>

CDC Cleaning

<http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html>

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

<http://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>

EMPLOYEES EXHIBITING SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19

CDC Sickness Steps

<http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html>

OSHA TRAINING

Federal OSHA

<http://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf>

SOCIAL DISTANCING

CDC

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html>

Social distancing calculator

<https://www.banquettablespro.com/socialdistancing-room-space-calculator>



