

MEMO

TO: Catholic Mutual Members

FROM: Michelle Zezulak, Director of Risk Management
1-800-228-6108 ext. 2394
mzezulak@catholicmutual.org

DATE: June 3, 2020

We have been getting numerous questions regarding what a Back to School plan should contain or guidelines for a sample plan. While the school year is just around the corner, information from the CDC and civil authorities is fluid and ever-changing. To complicate matters, jurisdictions have different rules, not just by State, but even by counties or municipalities. They each have their own directives and requirements that need to be followed.

Information provided by the CDC can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/schools.html>.

The CDC guidelines are somewhat generic. We believe this relates to the difficulty of developing a one-size-fits-all plan and/or guidelines to fit all educational facilities. To complicate matters, guidance likely should be varied by elementary, middle school and high school. With this said, keep in mind there will never be a perfect plan. Any plan made will not be foolproof and it will be impossible to remove all risk. Our recommendation would be to carefully combine a common sense approach regarding what works for your school along with CDC guidelines and local/state directives and requirements.

Keep in mind, health authorities are providing guidelines that address the health concerns of COVID-19. Some of the health-related guidelines are overlooking traditional security measures that have been taken to protect children. We should be sure to balance traditional security needs with health needs.

Attached are some additional items that should be considered when putting together a plan for the reopening of your school(s). Once you have a plan put together for your school reopening, please feel free to forward a copy to your Risk Management Representative at Catholic Mutual if you would like for us to review.

Catholic Mutual.. "CARES"

Guide to Reopening Schools

Once it is determined that State/Local directives are allowing schools to reconvene, you should develop a response plan coordinated with the CDC and your State/Local Health Department recommendations related to COVID-19. While there is no perfect plan, the following guidelines and precautionary measures should be considered for the safety and well-being of your students, staff and volunteers to lower the exposure and spread of COVID-19 as you reopen your school.

Keep in mind, the spread of the virus may not diminish because of these new guidelines. It is important to consistently monitor any increase of COVID-19 cases in your community. Also, keep in mind that the more people a student or staff person interacts with, and the longer that interaction, the higher the risk of COVID-19 spread.

General Considerations

Staying Home When Appropriate

- Employees and students who are sick or experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, have tested positive for COVID-19 or recently had close contact with a person with COVID-19 should stay home. The school should post a link to the COVID-19 exposure questions on their website and consider posting signage on the entrance door asking anyone with a fever or flu-like symptoms not to enter the school.
- Consideration should be given to how students and staff that are considered "high risk" and more vulnerable to the virus can continue participating in virtual classes, activities and events.
- Consider flexible sick leave policies for employees and for student absences. This will allow for staff and students that are sick, have been exposed, or are caring for someone who is sick to be able to stay at home.
- Sick absences should not require a doctor's note to return as medical facilities are under increased strain. Consider a communication system for staff and or student parent/guardian to self-report to the school if they have tested positive or were exposed to someone with COVID-19 within the last 14 days.
- Return to the school after absences due to COVID-19 for both employees and students should be in accordance with the CDC, state/local health department guidelines, OSHA and/or EEOC.

- Ensure there is an established communication policy to employees and parents to effectively communicate policies and policy changes.
- The CDC's criteria in the following links should be considered when a sick staff member, student or volunteer should return to work/school.
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html>
 and/or <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/quarantine-isolation.html>

Symptom Monitoring/Screening

- When feasible, consider conducting daily health checks or symptom screening of staff and students.
- Staff and students who develop COVID-19 symptoms while at school should be separated immediately away from others. CDC guidance for individuals who are sick should be followed.
- Parents of students who become sick at school should be notified immediately and come get their child.
- Areas utilized by the sick staff member or student should be cleaned and disinfected following CDC guidelines.

Social Distancing Measures

- Whenever possible, social distancing of at least 6 feet apart should be followed. Consideration of distancing would apply to desks/chairs/tables, lunchrooms, hallways, etc. This may result in smaller class sizes with limited seating.
- For younger students, consideration should be given to keeping students within the same group throughout the day so they are only exposed to a certain number of the same people.
- For older students, consideration will need to be given as to how the daily structure can be modified to limit exposure created by students moving from classroom to classroom, lockers, etc. Examples of modifications can include:
 - Keeping students in the same classroom for several classes in a row
 - Establishing a college learning 4x model that includes 4 classes in the first semester and 4 in the second semester
- Establish curbside drop-off and pick-up to limit direct contact between parents and staff members and adhere to social distancing recommendations. If children are met outside, an assigned staff member from the child's static group should escort the child into the facility when they arrive. Consider staggering arrival and drop-off times to manage the flow of students into and out of the facility.
- Consideration should be given to maintaining social distancing while bussing students.

- Consider providing physical guides, such as tape on floors or sidewalks and signs on walls, to ensure that individuals remain at least 6 feet apart.
- Shared spaces such as communal spaces and break rooms should be closed or consider staggering the use of these spaces.
- Encourage avoiding group events, gatherings or meetings where social distancing of at least 6 feet between people cannot be maintained.
- Limit nonessential visitors, volunteers and activities as much as possible.
- Consider working with the local public school districts to establish a social distancing plan.

Healthy Personal Hygiene Measures

- Encourage staff and students to frequently wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. It is important to reinforce this practice throughout the day. Adequate healthy hygiene supplies/products should be available such as soap, hand sanitizer, paper towels, tissues, disinfectant wipes, cloth face coverings (as feasible) and no-touch/foot-pedal trash cans.
- Hand sanitizer stations should be readily available throughout the building and in each classroom.
- Staff and students should be encouraged to cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue to be immediately discarded after use and wash hands.
- The use of cloth face masks should be encouraged in accordance with the CDC's recommendations and individuals should be frequently reminded not to touch their face.

Cleaning and Disinfecting Efforts

- Classrooms, restrooms and touched surfaces as well as shared objects should be cleaned thoroughly each day and frequently throughout the day with EPA approved disinfectants.
- Ensure that custodial/maintenance staff and other people who are carrying out the cleaning or disinfecting of facilities are provided appropriate PPE to wear and are instructed on how to effectively use and apply EPA approved products according to the label.
- Playgrounds and gyms should only be used by one group at a time and cleaned after each use. Limit free play to ensure safe distancing.
- Consider posting signs in highly visible locations (i.e., at entrances and in restrooms) that promote proper hand washing and other protective measures that describe how to stop the spread of germs.

Ventilation Measures

- Ensure that ventilation systems are operating properly and that there is increased circulation of outdoor air as much as possible.

- If practical based on weather, consider keeping windows open for increased ventilation.
- While fresh air is encouraged for ventilation, it should not interfere with maintaining adequate security for the building.

Water Systems

- Take appropriate steps to ensure that all water systems and features like sink faucets are cleaned, sanitized and safe to use after a prolonged facility shutdown.
- Consider eliminating the use of drinking fountains and encouraging staff and students to bring their own water to minimize use and touching of water fountains.

Designated COVID-19 Point of Contact

- Designate a staff person(s) for various shifts throughout the day to be responsible for COVID-19 concerns (i.e., school nurse). All school staff and families should know who this person is and how to contact them.

Back-Up Staffing Plan

- Consider planning for the possibility of being short-staffed due to illness. Is there an adequate number of substitute teachers or other staff to fill in for these absences?

Food Service

- Cafeteria may not be able to accommodate the 6' social distancing recommendations. May want to consider having students bring their own meals or serving individually plated meals in classrooms instead of the cafeteria. (Be sure to keep food allergies in mind).

Transport and Travel Measures

- How to maintain social distancing on school buses needs to be considered.
- Ensure that transportation staff are following safety and hygiene protocols according to the CDC's guidance for bus operators.
- Consider discontinuing staff travel to conferences and workshops until further notice.

To further assist you when considering a return to school, please see the following link for additional guidance from the CDC.

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

Should you have any questions or need further assistance, please contact your Risk Management Representative