Guidelines for Catholic School Re-openings

In response to COVID-19 closures. Updated July 30, 2020

Health and Catholic school officials are continuing to take steps to prevent the spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19) into our communities. Catholic schools play an important role in these efforts with their reopening plans. They build upon routine practices that address the potential for a possible outbreak. Below is a listing of general guidelines for your consideration.

We are continuing to monitor the evolving situation and recommend you follow guidelines issued by healthcare and government officials, like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). The recommendations below are our interpretation of the latest guidelines.

Recommended Guidelines for Re-Opening

Establish cleaning and disinfection guidelines and encourage proper hygiene:
- Clean and disinfect surfaces that are frequently touched, such as shared desks, countertops, kitchen areas, electronics and doorknobs.
- Make hand-cleaning supplies readily available.

- Train staff on healthy hygiene practices so they can teach these to students.
- Staff and students should avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth to prevent infection.
- Ensure handwashing—this includes washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not available and hands are not visibly dirty, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 70% alcohol.
- Train staff on the potential use of additional personal protective equipment (PPE), especially custodial staff.
- Plan on additional sanitation of school buses. Consider installing a hand sanitizer station on the bus.

Control Exposure in the School:
- Encourage any students, staff or faculty to stay home if they are sick.
- If someone gets sick at school, particularly if they show symptoms of respiratory illness, isolate them from healthy students and staff until they can leave.
- Plan to have dedicated isolation room(s) or areas where these individuals can be quarantined. Consider rooms with an exterior entrance if possible to limit exposure

About BPIC

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BPIC offers a customizable program that allows each diocese to work with its broker in designing its own program structure. BPIC is led by its Board of Directors, along with the input of its Episcopal Moderator. BPIC offers a members only website comprised of risk management information and training modules. Contact information is provided below, if you would like more information about BPIC or the website.

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to other students and staff.

- Inform anyone who might have been exposed.
- Report any cases to your local health department.
- Any students, faculty or staff who have traveled internationally or on a cruise ship should self-isolate for 14 days upon return.
- Stagger staffing or schedules to reduce in-person interaction.

Follow Additional Cleaning Guidelines After Exposure:

- Close off areas used by the individuals with COVID-19 and wait as long as practical before beginning cleaning and disinfection to minimize potential for exposure to respiratory droplets. Open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in the area. If possible, wait up to 24 hours before beginning cleaning and disinfection.
  - Cleaning staff should clean and disinfect all areas used by the ill persons (such as offices, bathrooms, and common areas), focusing especially on frequently touched surfaces.
  - If surfaces are dirty, they should be cleaned using a detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.
  - For disinfection, follow the manufacturer's instructions for cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., concentration, application method and contact time).
    ⇒ Diluted household bleach solutions can be used if appropriate for the surface. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for application and proper ventilation. Check to ensure the product is not past its expiration date. Never mix household bleach with ammonia or any other cleanser. Unexpired household bleach will be effective against coronaviruses when properly diluted. Prepare a bleach solution by mixing:
      - 5 tablespoons (1/3 cup) bleach per gallon of water or
      - 4 teaspoons bleach per quart of water
    ⇒ Additional information on cleaning and disinfection of community facilities such as schools can be found on the CDC's website.

If surfaces are dirty, they should be cleaned using a detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.

Monitor and Plan for Absenteeism:

- Review the usual absenteeism patterns at your school among both students and staff.
- Alert local health officials about large increases in student and staff absenteeism, particularly if absences appear due to respiratory illnesses (like the common cold or the "flu," which have symptoms similar to COVID-19).
- Review attendance and sick leave policies. Allow absences even without documentation from doctors. Use flexibility, when possible, to allow staff to stay home to care for sick family members.
- Discourage the use of perfect attendance awards and incentives.
- Identify critical job functions and positions, and plan for alternative coverage by cross-training staff.
- Determine what level of absenteeism will disrupt continuity of teaching and learning and react accordingly to plan.

Assess Group Gatherings and Events:

- Limit/cancel events and meetings that require close contact. Consider postponing non-critical gatherings and events.
- Ensure you have a clear understanding of all upcoming gatherings and large events for your school community (e.g., assemblies, field days, spirit nights, athletic events). Give special consideration to events that might put students, staff, or their families in close

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proximity to others from communities that may have identified cases of COVID-19.

- Consider whether any of these events should be canceled. Speak with local health officials to help determine the best approach.
- Limit/cancel events and meetings in accordance with local size of group limitations.

Food Service and Nursing Stations:
- Review food service products for possible expired items.
- Inventory for potential expired drugs in the nursing station and other medical supplies.
- Follow procedures similar to those used at the start of the school year to setup equipment.
- Consider flushing the water pipes to eliminate possible stale water.

Continue to stay up to date on developments in your community during an outbreak.

Re-emergence of Virus

When a confirmed case of COVID-19 or other communicable disease has entered the school, consider implementing short-term closure procedures or the school's pandemic disease plans/protocols based on guidance from the local health department. The following guidelines are being provided for consideration regardless of the level of community spread.

It's important to follow the re-opening guidelines outlined above, along with the additional considerations listed below.

Consider a short-term dismissal to allow time for the local health officials to gain a better understanding of the COVID-19 situation impacting the school, and determine appropriate next steps, including whether extended dismissal duration is needed to stop or slow further spread of COVID-19. Local health officials' recommendations for the scope (e.g., a single school, multiple schools) and duration of school dismissals will be made on a case-by-case basis using the most up-to-date

information about COVID-19 and the specific cases in the community.
- Dismiss students and most staff for 2-5 days (short-term dismissal).
- Cancel extracurricular group activities, school-based afterschool programs, and large events such as assemblies, spirit nights, field trips, and sporting events.
- Discourage staff, students, and their families from congregating or socializing anywhere during the dismissal. This includes making group childcare arrangements, as well as gathering at places like a friend's house, a favorite restaurant, or the local shopping mall.
- Consult with officials to help determine a course of action for childcare programs or schools.
- Communicate with staff, parents, and students. Coordinate with local health officials to communicate dismissal decisions and possible COVID-19 exposure. This communication to the school community should align with the communication plan in the school's emergency operations plan.
- Plan to include messages to counter potential stigma and discrimination. In such circumstances, it is critical to maintain confidentiality of the student or staff member as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act.
- Remember that schools are not expected to screen students or staff to identify cases of COVID-19. If a community (or more specifically, a school) has cases of COVID-19, local health officials will help identify those individuals and will follow up on next steps.

For more helpful and up-to-date information regarding COVID-19, please visit our Pandemic Information Hub.

Thank you to Gallagher Bassett and Gallagher's National Risk Control Diocesan Team led by Jim Smith, M.S., CSP for compiling the information contained in this article... also Michael Speer, our Gallagher FEMA consultant.

Additional Considerations

In addition to the practices discussed in the lead article of this issue, the following insight and considerations to think about when re-opening Catholic schools are excerpted from the *Dioceses of New Jersey—Collaboration around COVID-19— Finding Resilience in Re-Opening* presentation on July 8, 2020 hosted by Gallagher. New Jersey Diocesan leaders participated along with Kevin D. Kijewski, J.D., Superintendent of Schools Department of Catholic Schools, Archdiocese of Detroit and the Gallagher Religious and Scholastic Practices leadership.

Three Keys from Kijewski
- ✓ Safe Return to School Taskforce and Planning
- ✓ Instructional Considerations and Contingency Planning
- ✓ Parent and Public Constituent Communication

New Jersey Dioceses...Sharing
- ✓ What is your framework and timeline for your school reopening plan?
- ✓ What are your top concerns in reopening?
- ✓ Do you have the budget for following CDC infectious disease prevention?
- ✓ Are you identifying "What If" scenarios?

Gallagher Scholastic Practice
- ✓ Difficulty social distancing—Facility Preparation
  - ⇒ Class Size—Alternative Educational Modalities—Common Areas
- ✓ Proper cleaning and disinfecting
- ✓ What to do when you have a COVID-positive student/teacher
- ✓ High Risk Students
- ✓ Athletics—How do we plan to address?
  - ⇒ Waivers

School—Adequately Prepare
- ✓ Follow CDC and State Guidelines
- ✓ Prepare Facilities and Faculty for Infectious Disease Prevention
- ✓ Staff Training and Communications
- ✓ PPE/Equipment Supplies
- ✓ Address asymptomatic workers spreading virus unknowingly

Potential FEMA Funding

On March 13, 2020, the US President issued a nationwide emergency declaration for COVID-19. Under this emergency declaration, and subsequent major disaster declarations, certain private nonprofit (PNP) organizations, including faith-based organizations, are eligible to apply for funding through FEMA's Public Assistance program.

Eligible Applicants can request funding for certain costs related to "emergency protective measures" conducted as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Emergency protective measures are activities conducted to address immediate threats to life, public health, and safety. Eligible costs, subject to FEMA approval, may include personal protective equipment, increased costs for cleaning and sanitation, specialized training directly related to COVID-19, and other costs.

Applications for FEMA Public Assistance can be submitted to the office of homeland security / emergency management in the state where the diocese is located and and it is recommended they be submitted as soon as possible.

Teaching, Guiding and Inspiring Requires Human Contact— COVID-19 Infographics from the CDC

The CDC offers a number of helpful print resources designed to convey important health and safety reminders for staff and students related to COVID-19. These infographic posters can be downloaded and printed to hang in school facilities. A sampling of topics includes, but is not limited to:

- K-12 Students: Did You Wash Your Hands?
- K-12 Students: Don't Feel Well? Stay Home When You are Sick
- K-12 Students: Keep Space Between You and Others
- K-12 Students: Class Rules
- Symptoms of Coronavirus (COVID-19) poster 24x36
- How to Safely Wear and Take Off a Cloth Face Covering

Source: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communication/print-resources.html?Sort=Date%3A%3Adesc

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