

MERCY 
SAFELY LEADING THE WAY

MERCY'S GUIDE FOR BACK-TO-SCHOOL 2021-2022

A Comprehensive Plan to Safely Return
for the 2021-2022 School Year



OUR LADY OF MERCY
SCHOOL FOR YOUNG WOMEN

Grades 6-12

SEPTEMBER 9, 2021

OUTLINE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	3
• Welcome!	
• Response Team	
Health Plan	5
• Mitigation Strategies	
• Illness	
Links and References.....	17

MISSION STATEMENT

We, the community of Our Lady of Mercy School for Young Women, are animated by the charism of Catherine McAuley, foundress of the Sisters of Mercy and by our motto: “Via, Veritas et Vita.” (I am the Way, the Truth and the Life). The school, opened in 1928, remains a sponsored ministry of the Sisters of Mercy.

We are a sixth through twelfth grade all women’s college preparatory school. We are guided by the values of our Catholic identity while respecting and welcoming students of diverse backgrounds.

We empower young women to unleash their potential through a vigorous pursuit of knowledge, service to others, a global perspective, and leadership opportunities. This pursuit is guided by a commitment to the virtues of hospitality, compassion, integrity, and respect for the inherent dignity of all.

Our Lady of Mercy School for Young Women encourages students to be pioneers of change. Our mission is to provide an enriching balance of learning, serving, and loving that creates a community of care and sisterhood.

The procedures and protocols within this document are subject to alteration as circumstances and official guidance change.



INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the 2021-2022 Academic School Year!

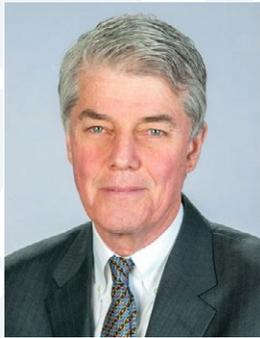
Since March 2020, Our Lady of Mercy School for Young Women has led the way in responding to the Coronavirus public health crisis while maintaining high academic standards. As one of the first schools to close in anticipation of the New York State mandate, Mercy was fully prepared to launch our heralded Synchronous Online Learning Program. While not the typical method of experiencing Mercy's world-class education, the Online Learning Program nonetheless was championed by parents as "being on the forefront of keeping the students safe" while "giving parents and their daughters comfort during a difficult time." Our students rose to the challenge and excelled at online learning... seeking help and assistance when necessary, and finishing the school year far ahead of students in so many other educational institutions.

Our program evolved last year as we brought students back to two campuses while providing synchronous remote instruction for those at home. We hoped, as the 2020-2021 school year drew to a close, that we would be so very close to normal this school year.

Alas, with the Delta variant spreading and new guidelines coming from the CDC, NYSED, NYSDOH, and MCDPH, we have had to prepare for another school year with mitigation strategies in place. As a result of our common safe practices in 2020-2021, we only experienced one case of in-school transmission of the virus. Our continued vigilance as the new Delta variant spreads, and perhaps other maladies emerge, will help us remain a safe place for learning and growing.

COVID-19 RESPONSE TEAM

In May 2020, Our Lady of Mercy School for Young Women announced its COVID-19 Reentry Advisory Task Force. Chairing the Task Force was



James "Jim" Maxwell, M.D., Clinical Assistant Professor in the Department of Neurosurgery at the University of Rochester Medical Center, and Chief of Neurosurgery at Rochester General Hospital. As a father of two Mercy graduates, and himself a graduate of McQuaid Jesuit, Georgetown University, and Columbia University, Dr. Maxwell has been leading a team of health, academic, financial, and facilities committees.

The Task Force acted as the school's primary interpreter of the legislative directives and mandates for student, faculty, and visitor safety. In October 2020, the Task Force shrank and evolved into the COVID-19 Response Team. It is comprised of local health experts, business professionals, and members of the school administration. This team meets regularly to evaluate the status of our plan and the state of the Coronavirus pandemic as it impacts our community. The Team developed the protocols articulated herein in compliance with guidance and mandates from government agencies.

Response Team Members 2021-2022

Jim Maxwell, M.D. - Clinical Assistant Professor in the Department of Neurosurgery at the University of Rochester Medical Center, and Chief of Neurosurgery at Rochester General Hospital

Pam Fennell Baker, J.D. '74 P'12 - President/CEO at Mercy

Kris Borrelli, NP - School Nurse at Mercy

Dave Carro - Vice President for External Affairs at Mercy

Colleen Davis, M.D., MPH P'12 '15 '18 - Chief of the Pediatric Emergency Department at University of Rochester Golisano Children's Hospital; member, Board of Trustees at Mercy

Sherylanne Diodato, Ph.D. '93 - Dean of the Middle School at Mercy

Sue Hespen - Administrative Support

Marty Kilbridge, Ed.D. - Principal at Mercy

Mike Waters - Vice President at Xerox (retired); consultant at Mercy

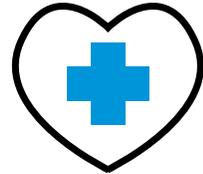
Dana Whipple - Dean of Student Life

Anthony Yandek - Athletic Director at Mercy and the school's Coronavirus Coordination Officer

HEALTH PLAN

Keeping the Mercy Community Safe

Our Lady of Mercy School for Young Women is committed to fulfilling our mission to nurture the faith and intellect of our young women and to do so in a safe and welcoming environment. The present COVID-19 health emergency has forced us to alter our standard practices in order to continue to offer an exceptional education. This plan outlines the procedures and protocols we are implementing to keep our community safe. They have been developed based on federal, state, and local guidance and medical and epidemiological advice from members of our COVID-19 Response Team and its antecedent, the COVID-19 Reentry Advisory Task Force. The procedures and protocols on the following pages are subject to alteration as circumstances and official guidance change.



Coronavirus Coordination Officer

The COVID-19 Response Team includes a Coronavirus Coordination Officer, who is responsible for the overall coordination and enforcement of Mercy's Coronavirus policies and procedures. The Coronavirus Coordination Officer also serves as a point of contact for students, faculty, and staff for information relating to Mercy's Coronavirus plans and procedures. Mercy Athletic Director Anthony Yandek (ayandek@mercyhs.com, 585-288-7120 x331) serves as the school's Coronavirus Coordination Officer.

Local Transmission Rates

The CDC COVID-19 TRACKER will serve as our official resource for local transmission:
<https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view>

MITIGATION STRATEGIES

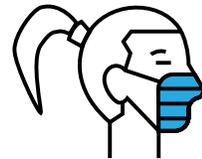
The CDC has identified strategies that have, over time, proven to help mitigate the spread of the Coronavirus. Our daily practices have been crafted to support these strategies.

Vaccination

For the safety of our school community and community-at-large, we strongly encourage everyone within the Circle of Mercy, including all age-appropriate students, to receive the COVID-19 vaccination. We are happy to report the vast majority of Mercy faculty and staff are fully vaccinated; those few who are not will receive weekly testing. Students will not be tested regularly as they were last year unless guidance changes.

Face Coverings

Face coverings will be required throughout the day while indoors at Mercy, except during lunch and scheduled breaks. Aside from vaccination, face coverings are the best strategy for slowing and halting the spread of the virus. Wearing a face covering helps to protect others by containing respiratory droplets when one coughs, sneezes, or speaks. Mercy is providing each student with two Mercy masks. More are available for purchase in the bookstore. The masks are considered part of the school dress code. Blue medical masks or school-issued masks from the 2020-21 school year may be used in their place. Mercy will not be providing disposable medical masks unless a student's mask is soiled or damaged throughout the course of the school day. At this time, masks are not required while outdoors. Information on how to properly wear a mask can be found here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/about-face-coverings.html>



Social Distancing

All members of the community, regardless of whether they have symptoms, are expected to adhere to the following social distancing guidelines:

- Stay at least three (3) feet from other people at all times.
- Social distancing of six (6) feet in all directions must be maintained between individuals while eating or participating in activities requiring the projection of voice (e.g. singing, drama), playing wind instruments, or indoor aerobic activity.



Ventilation and Air Filtration

Ventilation helps disperse the virus. When possible, we will open windows to allow fresh air to circulate. Through the generosity of donors to last year's Gala, we have purchased air purifiers for rooms without windows and other spaces where windows are small and air flow is limited. Weather permitting, teachers will be encouraged to take their classes outside and students will be given opportunities to eat lunch outdoors.

MITIGATION STRATEGIES (CONTINUED)

Handwashing and Hygiene

Faculty, staff, and students will practice hand hygiene throughout the day.

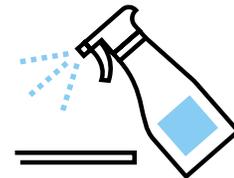
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, sneezing, or touching your face.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Proper washing and disinfecting involves covering all surfaces of one's hands and rubbing them together until they feel dry.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth, and wash your hands before and after touching your face.
- When you cough or sneeze always cover your mouth and nose with the inside of your elbow or a tissue if available. Throw used tissues in the trash.



Mercy has installed nearly 160 hand sanitizing stations throughout the campus facility to better serve the needs of the school community, but students are encouraged to bring their own hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol for ready access.

Disinfection

Mercy follows guidance from federal and state governments and agencies regarding cleaning and disinfecting facilities. While housekeeping crews will continue to clean common spaces based on CDC guidelines, we all will play a role in taking additional care to wipe down commonly used surfaces. Follow instructions about disinfection in common use and high touch areas. Also, clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces. Do not share items such as food, drinks, writing or eating utensils, or similar items. Though no longer necessary, students and teachers will be able to clean and disinfect tables, desks, and workstations prior to each use with sanitizing wipes that are made available for use in each classroom.

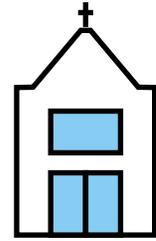


Mercy's facilities will be cleaned and disinfected daily as appropriate by professional cleaning staff.

MITIGATION STRATEGIES (CONTINUED)

Visitor Policy

Mercy will not be accepting visitors during school hours. This includes parents or guardians who might wish to drop off lunch, books, or personal belongings for their daughters. Meetings with teachers, counselors, or administrators will be by appointment only. Outside groups will be permitted to use the school facilities by invitation and appointment only.



Symptom Monitoring

We have discontinued the use of the health screening app during the 2021-2022 school year but we will require anyone, whether vaccinated or not, who has COVID-19 symptoms to stay home and be assessed for COVID-19 by a healthcare provider. If referred for a COVID-19 test by your healthcare provider, it must be for a PCR test; rapid antigen tests will not be accepted. At this time, COVID-19 symptoms include one or more of the following:

- Temperature of 100 °F (37.8 °C) or higher
- Chills
- Cough
- Hard time breathing, shortness of breath
- Sore throat
- Body aches
- Loss of taste or smell
- Headache
- Loss of appetite
- Nasal congestion
- Nausea, vomiting or diarrhea
- Fatigue

If you have any symptoms, always wear a face mask to avoid possible virus transmission to others and contact your healthcare provider immediately. After calling your healthcare provider, you must also contact Mercy's Coronavirus Coordination Officer (ayandek@mercyhs.com) to provide notification of your symptoms.

If your daughter has a pre-existing health condition whose symptoms present similarly to that of COVID-19, such as migraines, please be sure to have a doctor's note on file with the school health office.

Per NYSDOH requirements, Mercy is offering rapid antigen screening testing to unvaccinated, asymptomatic students on a weekly basis in geographic areas identified by the CDC as having moderate, substantial, or high transmission rates. Parent/guardian consent must be obtained. Information regarding these tests is available on the Nurse's webpage.

MITIGATION STRATEGIES (CONTINUED)

Close Contacts

A close contact is defined as someone who was within six feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes when one or both people were not wearing masks.

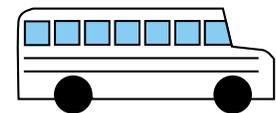
If asymptomatic, fully vaccinated close contacts do not need to quarantine following an exposure (they can continue to attend school in-person and participate in other activities). Fully vaccinated close contacts should be referred for COVID-19 testing three to five days after exposure. In addition to correctly wearing masks in school, girls should wear a mask in other indoor public settings for 14 days from date of exposure per CDC guidance. If symptoms develop, individuals must isolate and they will be referred by the local health department to get a COVID-19 test.

Close contacts who are unvaccinated will be placed in quarantine by the local health department. If the individual is symptom free for 10 days from their last contact with the COVID-19 case, and released from quarantine by the health department, they can return to school. If symptoms develop during quarantine, they will be referred by the local health department to get a COVID-19 test.

More information regarding close contacts and the steps to follow are outlined on page 11 under “What to do When you are Experiencing Symptoms or Come into Close Contact with Someone with COVID.”

Transportation

Bus transportation is the purview of your school district of residence. If you do not receive information regarding your district’s transportation policies, contact the district’s transportation office.



- Students are expected to wear masks at all times on buses.
- Hand-sanitizing stations will be available as students unload from buses and hand sanitizing will be mandatory.
- Students will maintain social distancing while lining up to enter and exit buses.
- Student drop-off will occur so that students will unload from cars and buses in a way that allows for social distancing.

Carpooling is strongly discouraged as it violates social distancing rules. However, “social bubbles” are sometimes established by two or three families that agree to socialize only among themselves. Masks must be worn if students carpool. Our desire is to prevent an outbreak which will harm our community’s health and possibly close the school.

School-sponsored field trips are on hold until further notice.

MITIGATION STRATEGIES (CONTINUED)

Cafeteria

Eating without masks remains the activity with the greatest potential for the spread of the virus. Though an enormous challenge, the cafeteria and other locations in the building will be reconfigured to allow space for students to sit and eat while maintaining six feet of social distance. A close contact is defined as someone who was within six feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes when one or both people were not wearing masks.

- During warm weather, students will be permitted to eat outside.
- Masks may only be removed when students sit to eat. When students finish eating, they are to replace their masks, whether they have left their seat or not.
- Food service staff will wear gloves and masks at all times, and gloves will be replaced as needed.
- Hand washing or sanitizing should be done by each student immediately prior to and after eating.
- Students should not share food, beverages, utensils, or eating spaces.
- Students will be assigned seats to facilitate contact tracing should that be necessary.

Interscholastic Athletics

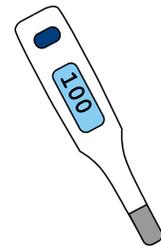
The start of interscholastic athletics is officially governed by the New York State Public High School Athletic Association. Mercy plans to proceed with all athletic offerings for the 2021-22 school year. Masking and social distancing policies will remain in place for all athletic events occurring indoors. For outdoor athletic events, masking is strongly encouraged but is not required. Social distancing expectations remain in place for outdoor events. When traveling to opposing schools, please be mindful of the COVID-19 policies and procedures they have in place. For updates from the school Athletic Department visit <https://ourladyofmercyhs.schoolteams.com>. Any changes in policy and procedure pertaining to athletics will be posted to the Mercy Athletics website as well as communicated through email and/or the weekly Parent Update.

ILLNESS

Stay at Home When Sick

It is important to stay physically distant from others when sick to reduce the transmission of disease. If you are sick, stay home to reduce exposure and transmission of the illness to other individuals in the community. Students should notify their healthcare provider and the school Coronavirus Coordination Officer (ayandek@mercyhs.com) if they are experiencing any of the following COVID-19 symptoms:

- Temperature of 100 °F (37.8 °C) or higher
- Chills
- Cough
- Hard time breathing, shortness of breath
- Sore throat
- Body aches
- Loss of taste or smell
- Headache
- Loss of appetite
- Nasal congestion
- Nausea, vomiting or diarrhea
- Fatigue



Presenting Symptoms on Campus

A student or staff member who is experiencing COVID-19 symptoms is required to stay home. If a student experiences symptoms of COVID-19 while on campus, she will go to a supervised isolation area until a responsible adult can come to campus to pick her up to take her home. If a teacher experiences symptoms of COVID-19 while on campus, they are to notify the Coronavirus Coordination Officer (ayandek@mercyhs.com) immediately and then leave the school premises.

What to do When you are Experiencing Symptoms or Come into Close Contact with Someone with COVID

Mercy has developed an infection control plan based on Monroe County Department of Public Health (MCDPH) and CDC guidance. The control plan will be monitored and enforced by the school's Coronavirus Coordination Officer who will work closely with the MCDPH and the NYSDOH.

ILLNESS (CONTINUED)

Mercy requires anyone, whether vaccinated or not, who has COVID-19 symptoms to stay home and be assessed for COVID-19 by a healthcare provider. If referred for a COVID-19 test by your healthcare provider, it must be a PCR test; rapid antigen test results will not be accepted.

If your child is experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, you must also notify the school by calling or emailing the attendance secretary. The Coronavirus Coordination Officer, school nurse, or attendance secretary will contact you via phone or email with step-by-step instructions to follow.

Response Algorithms

The Monroe County Department of Public Health has issued three helpful algorithms for situations that arise in regards to COVID symptoms and exposure. As these may change, current ones will always be posted on the nurse's page of the Mercy website: <https://www.mercyhs.com/student-parent/nurse-information/>

On the following pages, the algorithms address:

- 1) if you are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms
- 2) if you are vaccinated and exposed to COVID
- 3) if you are not vaccinated and exposed to COVID



Department of Public Health

Monroe County, New York

Adam J. Bello
County Executive

Michael D. Mendoza, MD, MPH, MS
Commissioner of Public Health

Student, teacher or staff member with NO known exposure has a temperature >100° OR exhibits new or unusual symptoms of COVID-19:

Fever, chills • Shortness of breath • Sore throat • Loss of taste or smell • Headache • Loss of appetite • Cough • Nasal congestion • Nausea, vomiting or diarrhea • Fatigue • Muscle or body aches



REGARDLESS of vaccination status, individual must stay or return home. Contact health care provider.



Alternate diagnosis

Individual can return to school with a note signed by their health care provider explaining the alternate diagnosis.

COVID-19 test result is negative:

Individuals can return to school if symptoms are improving and they are fever-free for 24 hours without fever reducing medication.

They must provide a copy of the negative test result or a note from their health care provider indicating the negative result.

COVID-19 test result is positive:

Individual is placed in isolation by MCDPH.

Individual can return to school after being released from Isolation by MCDPH.

No test/No alternate diagnosis:

Individual may return to school after at least 10 days have passed since date of first symptoms

AND

Individual's symptoms are improving

AND

Individual is fever-free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medicines.

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(585) 753-2991 • fax: (585) 753-5115 • www.monroecounty.gov • e-mail: mchealth@monroecounty.gov



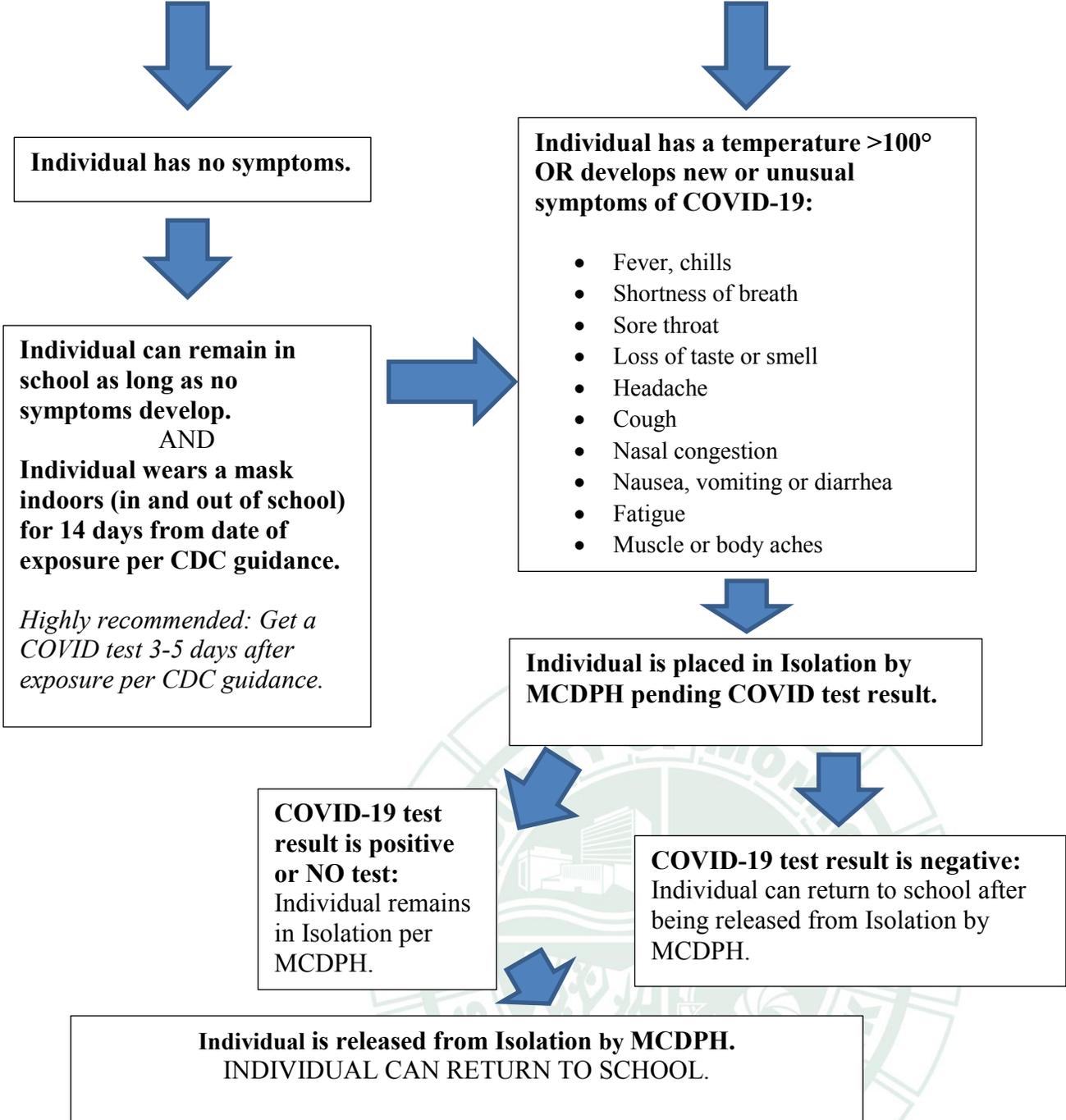
Department of Public Health

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PreK-12 student, teacher or staff member with proof of full vaccination is exposed to COVID-19. (August 17, 2021)



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Department of Public Health

Monroe County, New York

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The Monroe County Department of Public Health issues Quarantine Order for K-12 unvaccinated student, teacher or staff member exposed to COVID-19. (August 17, 2021)

Individual is symptom free for 10 days from their last contact with the COVID 19 case.

AND

Individual is released from quarantine by the Monroe County Department of Public Health.

Individual can return to school.

Individual does not get a COVID-19 test: The student remains in quarantine for 10 days.

While in quarantine, individual has a temperature >100° OR has new or unusual symptoms of COVID-19:

- Fever, chills
- Shortness of breath
- Sore throat
- Loss of taste or smell
- Headache
- Cough
- Nasal congestion
- Nausea, vomiting or diarrhea
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches

COVID-19 test result is negative: Individual remains in quarantine for the remainder of the 10 days.

COVID-19 test result is positive: Individual is placed in Isolation by the MCDPH.

Individual is released from Quarantine or Isolation by the MCDPH. INDIVIDUAL CAN RETURN TO SCHOOL.

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ILLNESS (CONTINUED)

Positive Tests

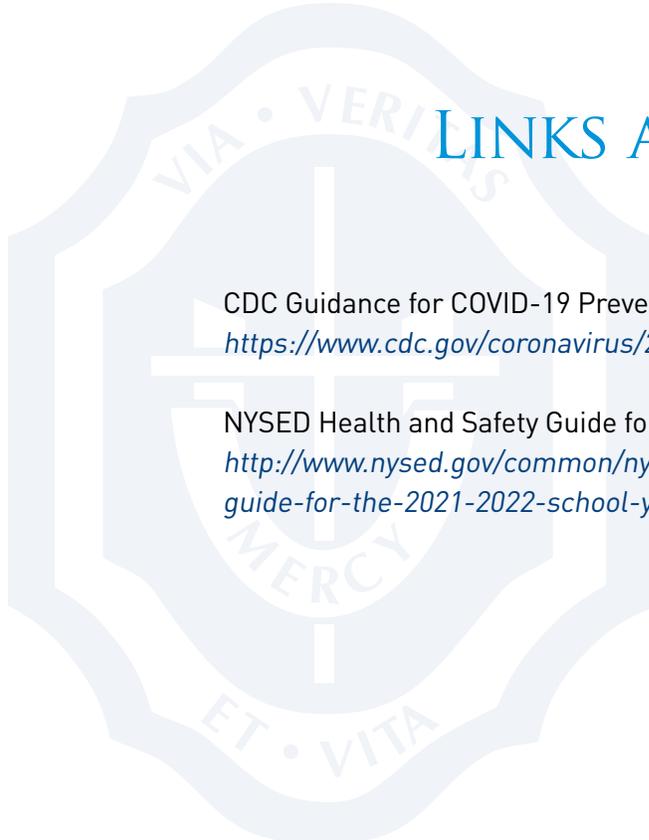
Any Mercy faculty or staff member or student who has a positive COVID-19 laboratory result is referred to as a Personnel or Student Confirmed Case.

At a minimum, Confirmed Cases will be required to self-isolate for a period of time as instructed by the county health department. At the conclusion of this period, the Confirmed Case will obtain a note from the county health department releasing the Confirmed Case to return to school or work. The Coronavirus Coordination Officer or a designee will work with the Monroe County Department of Public Health to assess the requirements for determining when a faculty or staff member can return to Mercy. Student Confirmed Cases will also be required to work with the school health office to complete a “Return to Play” protocol in order to be released to participate in physical education classes and interscholastic athletics. More information regarding “Return to Play” is available on the nurse’s page of the school website.

Remote Instruction

Students who are in official quarantine or isolation due to COVID-19 and those with medical documentation will benefit from observing class remotely. While our remote instruction has set us apart from many other schools, in-person instruction is preferable. Concurrent in-class and virtual instruction puts a significant strain on our teachers and diminishes the educational experience for all. While temporarily remote students will be able to observe classes, teachers will not be required to engage short-term remote students in active class participation and group work.

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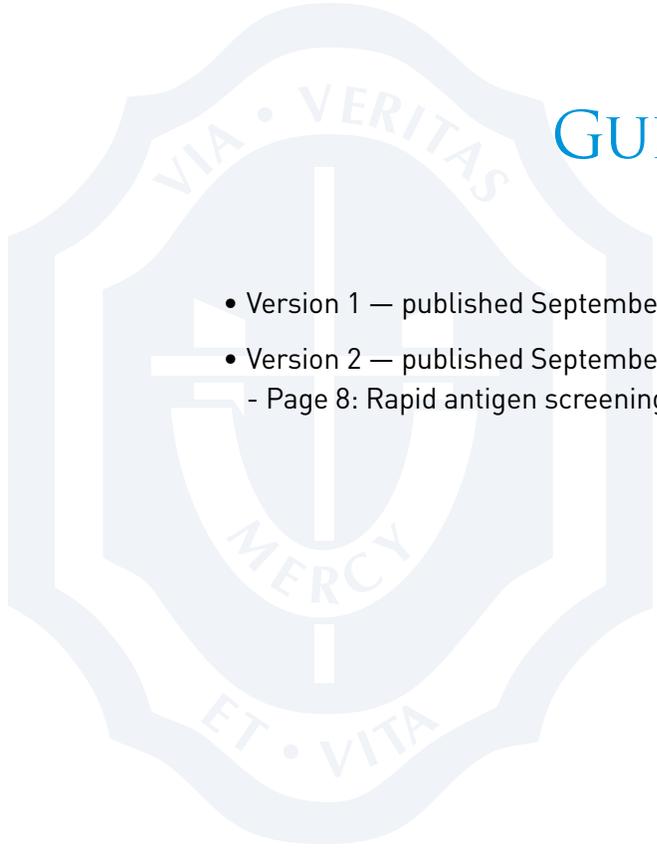
LINKS AND REFERENCES

CDC Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html>

NYSED Health and Safety Guide for the 2021-2022 School Year

<http://www.nysed.gov/common/nysed/files/programs/back-school/nysed-health-and-safety-guide-for-the-2021-2022-school-year.pdf>



GUIDE UPDATES

- Version 1 — published September 6, 2021
- Version 2 — published September 9, 2021
 - Page 8: Rapid antigen screening update