



Health Office News

August 2021

Hi everyone, here we go again. It seems like our plans for the start of school had changed daily already! The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) has finally provided formal guidance regarding schools and COVID related safety protocols. Fortunately, we already had the protocols and procedures outline from last year. There are only slight changes to our current strategies from last year.

We will continue to *wear our masks while in the building and when using transportation*. A mask protects both you and others around you. The virus is spread mainly from person-to-person by respiratory droplets. This means that the virus travels in the air to people who are in close contact with one another. We wear our masks to contain our droplets so people in close proximity to us don't "share" our droplets. Respiratory droplets are produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or they can possibly be inhaled into the lungs. It is important to remember that COVID-19 may also be spread by people who are not showing symptoms.

Face coverings can be disposable masks or cloth coverings. They need to fit your face to cover your nose and mouth. Also the face coverings need to contain your "droplets". A good test is to try to blow out a candle while wearing your mask. If you can blow it out through your mask, then you need a thicker face covering. It can be as simple as doubling the material over your nose and mouth to make sure it's thick enough.

We suggest you have several face coverings on hand so you can launder one while having another to use. Laundering your face covering like any other garment is fine, or just simple soap and water and air-drying will also work.

When we are outside, we are not required to wear masks. We had been fortunate last year as we were able to use our outside spaces for breaks and instruction. That is something we plan to continue to do.

Another way to keep droplets “out of your space” is to *physically distance* yourself from others. Physical distancing, means keeping a safe space between yourself and other people who are not from your household. Our newest guidance is to have students 3 feet apart as much as possible. This rule applies to the classroom (when masks are on), otherwise a 6 foot distance is the rule (when masks are off).

We are also making our school as safe as possible by arranging the classrooms for the new distance rule. When eating snack or lunch in the classroom or lunchroom, we will increase the distance between students and utilize shields or dividers.

Another way to prevent droplets from infecting you is *good hand washing*. You can help yourself and your loved ones stay healthy by washing your hands often. *Use Hand Sanitizer* when you can't use soap and water.

We will continue to clean and disinfect the whole school building on a regular basis, paying particular attention to high touch and high traffic areas such as doorknobs and railings. This will protect us from any viruses that may be residual on surfaces.

Lastly, our “*Sick Procedure*” will remain the same. In the Handbook there will be an insert outlining the process for screening your student for the potential of COVID-19 illness symptoms. The insert will have a two part questionnaire for screening both for illness and potential exposure to a person who has been diagnosed with COVID-19. This questionnaire should be used every day prior to sending your child to school.

The “*Sick Procedure*” supersedes previous health office procedures for illness as related to COVID-19 symptoms. The Handbook insert will also contain revised criteria for your student to re-enter school after a positive infection or confirmed exposure.

It is helpful to get into a routine of monitoring your student's health so you are aware of any changes in their baseline health status.

If your child has any chronic conditions or symptoms that should be reported, please reach out to me so I can take this into consideration. If a child is sent to school with any of the listed symptoms, I will be obligated to send them home. In order for us to stay open for in-person learning, we have to keep our potential COVID risk low.

If a student is sent to school with COVID-like symptoms, the student will be assessed, isolated and sent home immediately. Also if a student should develop symptoms during the school day, they be sent to the nurse and dismissed immediately.

As a school community, we are diligent in our efforts to provide the safest environment possible. We will continue to monitor the wearing of masks/face coverings, physical distancing, practice hand hygiene, and continue cleaning and disinfecting throughout the school day.

Here are some helpful preventative tips when sending your student to school.

Please administer all prescribed medications.

Wash hands for 20 seconds before leaving the house.

Have a clean mask on (and one or two extra placed in their backpack) for the bus ride and if waiting in a group at the bus stop.

Make sure your student has a water bottle, with their name on it, for use at school. Water bottles can be filled at the refill station at water fountains.

Speak with your child's primary physician prior to the start of the school year to address any concerns you may have such as common treatments for seasonal allergies that may be confused as Covid-19 symptoms and formulating a plan that may help reduce the risk of your child being sent home.

Avoid skipping meals such as breakfast, and pack snacks to help alleviate symptoms at school. I often see upset stomachs and nausea, which could be confused with Covid symptoms and cause the child to be sent home this year.

Please feel free to reach out to me with any questions or concerns regarding our safety plan or any health issue you would like to discuss regarding your student.

Catherine Roto R.N., B.S.N., C.C.R.N.