Diocese of Des Moines Catholic Schools
Pandemic or Infectious Disease Plan

More than any other setting, schools tend to be affected by the spread of infectious disease. Children easily spread illnesses to one another by being in close proximity to one another and their ineffective hand washing. The Catholic schools in the Diocese of Des Moines play an important role in protecting the health of our students and staff from contagious diseases.

This Pandemic or Infectious Disease Plan has been provided by the Diocese of Des Moines Catholic Schools Office as guidance for reducing the spread of illnesses at schools day-to-day, as well as during pandemic or infectious disease outbreaks, such as COVID-19 or Coronavirus.

The plan includes the following:
1. Protocols for collaborative measures, absence reporting requirements
2. Preventive measures to be taken in the school
3. Procedures for cancelling school in the case of an outbreak
4. Considerations for re-opening schools

NECESSARY PARTNER CONTACT INFORMATION
- Emergency Line 211 (offers infectious disease guidelines)
- Iowa Department of Public Health (515) 281-7689
- Polk County Department of Health (515) 286-3798
- Dallas County Department of Health (515) 993-3750
- Union County Department of Health (641) 782-3545
- Pottawatamie County Department of Health (712) 328-4756
- Shelby County Department of Health (712) 755-4422

The CDC states, “Schools are not expected to make decisions about dismissal or canceling events on their own, nor to screen students or staff to determine a diagnosis.” Each school will remain in contact with their county health department. When calls are made to the Public Health Department, the school will share all data requested in order to adequately assess the situation.

DEPARTMENTAL COLLABORATIVE MEASURES
Each school will coordinate with the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH), Polk County Health Department, Polk County Emergency Management, Center for Disease Control (CDC), and World Health Organization (WHO) to monitor the spread of infectious disease. Each school will rely on the expertise and guidance of these organizations. Key information to learn from these organizations:
- Strain
- Location
- Travel recommendations
- Transmission method
- Incubation period
- Common symptoms
- Cleaning requirements
Each school will remain in communication with the Diocese of Des Moines Superintendent of Schools reporting any issues or concerns that arise.

**ABSENCE REPORTING TO THE SCHOOL**
During a pandemic, parents will be asked the specific reason for the absence when reporting their children absent from school. The purpose of this is to determine the percentage of absence due to illness. Students exhibiting symptoms will be sent home immediately. Each school will follow regular procedures when student/staff absence rate from sickness reaches 10%. The school will follow guidance from IDPH regarding next steps. This includes, but is not limited to parent communication, increased cleaning measures, student home quarantine procedures, and school closure.

**STRATEGIES TO PREVENT AND REDUCE THE SPREAD OF INFECTION DISEASES**

*How Germs Spread:* Illnesses such as the flu (influenza), Norovirus (nausea, vomiting, diarrhea), and colds are caused by viruses that infect the nose, throat, lungs, and gastrointestinal tract. Flu and cold viruses usually spread from person to person when an infected person coughs or sneezes and the virus is inhaled by another person. Norovirus is spread by infected persons passing germs through food or ineffective hand washing. Germs are also spread by droplets when a person touches something that is contaminated with a virus and then touches their nose, eyes, or mouth. The length of time germs can live on certain surfaces depends on the virus.

*Prevention and Education:* Schools have an opportunity to educate students, staff, and families on social etiquette, good health, hygiene habits, and disease prevention. The following steps are being used by SCHOOL to prevent the spread of illness on a regular basis:

- Facilities staff engage in nightly cleaning, including wiping down and disinfecting all surfaces, including handles, faucets, and railings using hospital grade cleaning agents
- Student/Parent Handbook requires students who are ill stay home until they are fever free for 24 hours without the assistance of medication
- When absence rates begin to rise, School Nurse will distribute information regarding disease prevention to parents
- Regular hand washing is encouraged and taught, including proper hygiene reminders
- Hand sanitizer (60% alcohol) is provided prior to students eating lunch

Each school is educating students with the message to 1) Cover your cough, 2) Wash your hands often, and 3) Stay home if you are sick.

*Cover Your Cough:* Teachers will instruct students to cover their nose when they sneeze or cover their mouth when they cough using their sleeve or a tissue, not their hands. Students and staff are encourage to wash their hands thoroughly after sneezing or coughing or use hand sanitizer.

*Wash Your Hands Often:* Students will be encouraged to wash their hands using warm, soapy water. They will learn to wet their hands, apply soap, and rub their hands together for 20 seconds before rinsing. Hand sanitizers can be used and will contain 60% alcohol. Teachers are encourage to allow time
for students to wash their hands upon arrival, after coughing or sneezing into their hands, before lunch, after using the restroom, and after recess.

Stay Home if You are Sick: The best way to stop the spread of disease is to stay home from school/work. This includes all members of the school community. SCHOOL will work within diocesan guidelines for sick leave policies should the need arise.

In addition to these three basic messages, SCHOOL will:

- Discontinue handshakes or hugs and will greet one another in another manner, such as a bow or wave.
- Shared pencils, markers, computers, or other school tools will be wiped with disinfectant throughout the day to prevent the sharing of germs.
- Frequently touched surfaces (doorknobs, light switches, countertops, chairs) will be wiped throughout the day.
- Hand sanitizers will be available in classrooms and throughout the school.

Teachers will also be working with students to prevent any bullying that may occur. Teachers will remind students that we treat everyone as Jesus treated people and will employ stories from Scripture that demonstrate this. Any student who chooses to bully another student will be disciplined as outlined in the school handbook.

Cancelling School Due to Infectious Disease Outbreak

The following steps will be taken in the event of school closure:

- The decision to close school will be made with guidance from IDPH
- All school activities and events, including childcare, will be cancelled
- Outside employees (sub teachers/coaches/greeters) should not be allowed to enter the building to lower the risk of illness.
- If for some reason the school is quarantined by a state agency in case of emergency, the school would work closely with the CDC and follow all recommendations from said agency and state officials for an emergency response. The specific ways to handle emergency situations are always unique and will have exceptions to the rule factored in with time restraints and safety precautions.

Should schools need to be cancelled/closed due to infection, each school will seek guidance from the Iowa Department of Education regarding how hours are to be accounted for during closure.

RE-OPENING SCHOOL AFTER CLOSURE DUE TO INFECTIOUS DISEASE OUTBREAK

Restoring the learning environment is the primary objective. Each school will develop a plan for re-opening school and helping students and staff acclimate to their school routine. Prior to re-opening the school, deep cleaning will take place. Any materials sent home with students (books, technology devices) will be disinfected before use once the school re-opens.
**Deep Cleaning Procedures**

Procedures for deep cleaning will be implemented at the recommendation of the CDC and IDPH. This may include but is not limited to:

- Deep cleaning of all surface areas, specifically door handles, faucets, all work spaces, table tops, railings, seating, and hard surfaces.
- Use of aerosol disinfectant for areas unable to be physically wiped down
- Special products are used for air handlers and spaces. These products are used in individual spaces with the building at full capacity of static pressures with air handling systems at 100% capacity.
- Each space would then be evacuated for a specific time period while the products are dispersed in the area via air.
- As the product is being utilized the air handling for that zone will be dispersed through the air handler and distributed to the entire zone. After a set time fresh air will be introduced to the area for drying purposes and ventilation. Then the system will be set for exhausting the air for residual smells and air flow pressure.
- After disinfection of all zones and air handlers we would then focus on walkways and open areas traveled in the school and all storage areas. These areas will be physically disinfected by authorized personnel.

**EDUCATION AND SUPPORT OF FACULTY AND STAFF**

- Continual education will be provided to staff regarding steps to prevent illness
- Extra supplies such as disinfectant spray, hand sanitizer, tissues, and any other personal protective devices will be provided as needed and recommended by governmental agencies
- Staff will be encouraged to stay home if they or their children are ill
- As needed, SCHOOL will work with the diocese in regards to alternative PTO plans

**COMMUNICATION PLANS**

- Parent and staff communication will be distributed early in the event, including overview of our plan of action
- Regular updates will be provided as necessary as conditions change to parents and staff
- Any guidance used regarding infectious disease will be taken directly from reputable sources (CDC, WHO, IDPH)