



# DIOCESE OF COLORADO SPRINGS

## OFFICE OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

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October 15, 2021

Dear Parents/Guardians,

"I urge you to live with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another through love, striving to preserve the unity of spirit through the bond of peace." Ephesians 4: 1-3

One of the core values of a Catholic school is that we are a community of faith. This requires that we work together as a family, to preserve the bond of peace. The Church's clear teaching affirms that parents are the first educators of their children. However, even a Catholic school must cooperate with civil authorities and their efforts to safeguard the health and well-being of its citizens. We are blessed to have Tara Cuccinelli as our Diocesan nurse consultant; she has the difficult task of conducting the contact tracing for all positive cases that have a connection to the schools. In that role as the COVID coordinator, she is required to follow the Colorado statute regarding COVID. While individuals may disagree with the outcome of her contact tracing, I would ask everyone to remember that this is a Christian community and, therefore, we are called to a higher standard of respectful dialogue.

In an effort to address misinformation in the school community, I want to provide the process we follow when we are notified of a positive case. The El Paso County Public Health Department can perform the contact tracing in which case we would provide them a list of names of students with possible exposures. Or, we can complete the contact tracing and notifications for the school community. We chose to have a COVID coordinator complete this work for the schools instead of the EPCPHD. Therefore, when there is a positive case tied to the school, Tara must contact the health department. She works diligently to contact trace and to morally, truthfully, and ethically follow the guidance from the EPCPH. These are the specific guidelines that EPCPH has shared with Tara.

### **The Colorado State pertaining to legal authority of the El Paso Health Department states:**

"Consistent with the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment's (CDPHE) guidance and in accordance with Colorado Revised Statute 25-1-122 and Board of Health Rule 6 CCR 1009-1, EPCPH will continue to require isolation and quarantine to limit the transmission and spread of infectious diseases. Isolation and quarantine are required by state law, including the provisions in Colorado Revised Statute 25-1-114. ***Schools are required by state law to follow these isolation and quarantine requirements for their staff, teachers, employees, and students.***

The complete guidelines from EPCHD for schools are available at:

<https://www.elpasocountyhealth.org/sites/default/files/2021-10/El%20Paso%20County%20Public%20Health%20-%20Updated%20COVID-19%20School%20and%20Child%20Care%20Supplemental%20Guidance%20-%202010-08-21.pdf>

The complete guidelines for contact tracing is available at: [Who Needs to Quarantine 072021 \(1\) 0.pdf \(elpasocountyhealth.org\)](#)

**As listed on this document, a close contact is someone who:**

- Was within 3 feet for 15 cumulative minutes over a 24-hour period, OR
- Lives in the same household, OR
- Sleeps in the same space, OR
- Had direct contact with the sick individual, OR
- Is identified as a close contact based on public health determinations

**A person may be considered immune or protected from COVID-19 if they:**

- Complete COVID-19 vaccine series, OR
- Test confirmed infection in the past 90 days OR
- Participated in surveillance testing at least one time in the previous week OR
- Both parties wearing a mask at the time of the exposure

**The specific requirements for a quarantine are detailed by the El Paso Health Department:**

**General Isolation and Quarantine Guidelines:**

- **Confirmed cases** need to isolate until all three criteria have been met:
  - 10 days have passed from the symptom onset date (or date of positive test if asymptomatic or symptom onset date is unknown)
  - **AND** fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medicine
  - **AND** improvement in symptoms
- A person may become ill or infectious anytime between 2 and 14 days after their last day of exposure to COVID-19. Three options for quarantine are allowable in the state of Colorado. They are listed below with the safest option first.
  - **Safest option:** Remain at home and away from others for a full 14 days. If you stay completely separate from others for 14 days after you were exposed, you do not put anyone at risk for catching COVID-19 from you. People who live in group settings like dorms, barracks, or homeless shelters must use this option. People who work with high-risk people, like those in nursing homes, should also follow a 14-day quarantine and contact their occupational health representative for further information. Please note, if you are notified of being a contact to a variant case, it is strongly recommended to complete the full 14-day quarantine.
  - **Safe option:** If you remain symptom-free for 10 days after exposure and don't live in a group setting, it's permissible to end quarantine and continue to self-monitor for symptoms for the remaining 4 days of the incubation period. CDC recently released data showing that there is a lower risk of becoming ill and passing on the virus at 11 to 14 days after exposure. While it is lower risk, there is still up to a 10% chance of passing on the virus after day 10. You must not be in contact with people who are elderly or at risk for severe illness for the full 14 days.
  - **Testing option:** The shortest option allowable for quarantine is seven days. To use this option, you must obtain a negative COVID-19 test on day five to day seven after your

exposure. Testing is a point-in-time measure and you may still become ill with the virus and pass it to others after leaving a seven-day quarantine. For these reasons, seven-day quarantine with testing is the least preferred option and not recommended by EPCPH in most cases

- **In no circumstances can quarantine be discontinued before 7 full days of quarantine have passed since exposure.** Regardless of whether someone is released from quarantine early, if they develop any symptoms of COVID-19 in the 14 days following their exposure, they must isolate immediately and notify public health.
- **Exposed individuals** should complete the quarantine period starting from the last day of exposure to the **confirmed, probable or suspect case**
  - If the **exposed individual** cannot isolate themselves from the **confirmed, probable or suspect case** (e.g. household members), then the last day of exposure starts on the day the **case** is no longer infectious (a minimum of 10 days).
  - If **exposed individuals** developed symptoms during the quarantine period, they would either follow the isolation guidelines or finish the quarantine, whichever is the longer time period.

We do not have agreement as a school community on the best way to get through this pandemic. Bishop Golka is strongly encouraging us to follow any rules which will help to end this pandemic time. As the pastor of this Diocese, he realizes that COVID is subject to political reactions but the health outcomes of COVID, which are still here among us, do not have a political angle. I hope that the school families will demonstrate their appreciation for all the school staff and the sacrifices they make to provide the best possible Catholic education to your children.

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Gregory Golyzniak, Pastor

Sheila Whalen, Superintendent