

**Recommendations from the *Task Force on Family Ministry, Children’s Ministry, and Schools on the reopening of K-12 schools and early childhood programs affiliated with parishes in the Episcopal Diocese of NC. (As of July 23, 2020)***

Introduction from the Bishops

These guidelines and recommendations have been prepared by a team of educators, parents, school officials, a pediatrician and a childcare center operator -all connected with Episcopal churches in our diocese and we endorse them wholeheartedly. *Our highest value is to protect the wellbeing of our children, students, faculty and their households.*

As we all realize, however, notions of wellbeing, safety and risk are large concepts and definitions may vary from situation to situation. Even what is essential to some may seem less so to another. More and more data about COVID-19 and children is accumulating but not necessarily making our determinations any easier. There are risk factors for children who have no safe place or support for staying and learning from home.

Though variety perspectives and situations were part of this collaboration, we know there is no one size fits all when it comes to your discernment about when and how to reopen places of learning for children and teenagers. While setting some essential parameters, these guidelines and recommendations give you and your local community room to make some of your own determinations for your own location. If you wish to offer an alternative or customized plan that appears to differ in some significant way from these recommendations, we are more than happy to consult with you.

In such a case please direct your communications to Bishop Hodges-Copple. [bishopanne@episdionc.org](mailto:bishopanne@episdionc.org). She and members of the team will be more than happy to work with you.

Thanks be to God for the time and talent, love and wisdom, expertise and research, that have been offered by this task force. God bless each of our school communities with continued wisdom and grace to navigate this uncharted territory.

**Recommendations and Guidelines**

**K-12 SCHOOLS**

- K-12 schools may open *only if* the parish’s local public school system has also reopened for some form of in-person learning. Re-opening procedures should be consistent with the parish’s local public schools; this includes possible A/B day schedules and limitations on numbers of children and adults per classroom.
- Schools **MUST** also be able to meet the ***Diocese of NC Safety Guidelines***, given below. **If these safeguards cannot be met, the facility may not open.**

**AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS (for K-12 children)**

- After school programs for this age group should consider opening prior to “Stage 2” only if they provide an **essential service**. These programs should follow the directives given in the Diocesan Guidelines for [Best Practices for Direct Services](#).
- Essential service programs are defined as programs that meet one of the following criteria:

- Serve a population with special needs (i.e. English as a second language education, disabilities focused programs, low-income meal programs)
- Programs MUST also be able to meet the ***Diocese of NC Safety Guidelines***, given below. **If these safeguards cannot be met, the facility may not open.**

#### **SAFE SITES FOR ONLINE LEARNING (for K-12 children)**

- Refer to the Diocese of NC's [Best Practices for Buildings and Grounds](#) and [Best Practices for Direct Services](#). Churches should work with their local public school system to determine if providing a Safe Site is feasible and safe.

#### **PART-TIME AND/OR PLAY-BASED EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS SERVING CHILDREN 0-5 YEARS/PRE-K**

- It is **not** recommended that *part-time or play-based* early childhood programs open until the Diocese of NC reaches "Stage 2".

#### **ESSENTIAL SERVICE PROGRAMS SERVING CHILDREN 0-5 YEARS/PRE-K**

- **Essential service programs** *may* open prior to "Stage 2". Essential service programs for this age group are defined as programs that meet one of the following criteria:
  - Are a full-time care program and therefore essential to the children's guardians it serves for the purposes of maintaining full-time employment.
  - Serve a population with special needs (i.e. English as a second language education, disabilities focused programs, low-income meal programs)
- Programs MUST also be able to meet the ***Diocese of NC Safety Guidelines***, given below. **If these safeguards cannot be met, the facility may not open**

#### **STATE REGULATED CHILD-CARE CENTERS**

- State regulated child-care centers operate under the direction of the state's governing board and are exempt from any conflicting recommendations or procedures of the Diocese of NC.

#### ***Diocese of NC Safety Guidelines for Schools and Programs Serving Children 0-12<sup>th</sup> grade***

#### **Facilities and Personnel:**

- Allow 42-54 square feet of space for each child or adult in a classroom (per the recommendations from the American Pediatric Association and CDC) to maintain healthy distancing and space.
- Teachers should stay with their assigned class to avoid possible exposure between classroom groups. There should be as little introduction of additional adults as possible. Limit people in the facility to staff/teachers necessary to keep ratios, especially during the instructional day.
- Children must stay in their classrooms except to go to the playground-no changing classrooms.

#### **Cloth Face Coverings (CFC)**

- Children 2 years old and older and adults are to wear a CFC in all public/shared spaces and classrooms.
- All people entering the building must wear a CFC.
- Teachers/staff are expected to comply with the state mandate to wear a CFC while in *any* public space.

**Daily Arrival and Departure:**

- Drop-off and pick-up times should be staggered to ensure physical distancing is possible and to prevent “bottlenecking”.
- Guardians should not enter the main school area (classrooms). Children should be dropped off in a designated area for check-in and daily health screenings (see details below).
- “Know Your Ws” poster should be posted in the check-in area. See below.
- Floor markings should be used in the designated check-in space to mark 6 ft. of distance between families as they await their screening.

**Daily Health Screening Details:**

- A staff member (not a high-risk person) should greet and screen children wearing a cloth face covering (CFC)
- Masks should be available for those who “forget” their mask.
- Each child’s temperature should be checked with touchless thermometer. Staff documents the reading.
- All health screening questions (see “Symptoms of COVID-19”) must be asked of the child’s guardian.
- A designated staff person takes the child to the classroom
- Hands are washed immediately after entering the classroom

**Additional Daily Procedures:**

- “Symptoms of COVID-19” poster should be posted on each door in the facility.
- After initial morning screening, teachers should be extra observant about any developing symptoms and document those symptoms accordingly. Children who develop a fever, new cough, new congestion etc. throughout the day should be isolated in a designated area with one staff member supervising; a parent/guardian must pick up the child ASAP.
- Staff should familiarize themselves with [this daily health check](#) from the NC Department of Health and Human Services.

**Preventing Spread in the Classroom:**

- Use floor markers to indicate where children should sit.
- Use outstretched arms to model the “don’t touch” distance.
- Post signage to remind teachers and children of keeping the distance – change the location of the signage periodically to enforce reminders.
- Remove items that are generally shared. Examples: water toys, sand, sensory play (rice, beans, play-doh). No shared stuffed animals or other objects that cannot be sanitized.
- Assign scissors and other frequently used materials to children (one per child, do not share)
- Use only prepackaged food in individual servings.
- Use disposable dishes unless appropriate dishwashing equipment is present.
- Check ventilation systems – ensure that air conditioning works and filters are clean. Open windows/doors if possible and not dangerous for children.
- All toys, surfaces, door handles, etc. must be cleaned (see instructions below) after each child’s use whenever possible.
- Singing is strongly discouraged as it causes a higher transmission rate of COVID-19.

**Cleaning and Hygiene**

- Classroom items/toys must be cleaned/sanitized at the end of each day (spray/wipe down, air dry if possible)
  - Sanitizing and disinfection solution: bleach/water solution to be made daily
    - Sanitizer 50 – 100 ppm
    - Disinfectant 700 – 1000 ppm (that’s strong stuff!!!)
    - [Calculate amount of bleach needed in water](#)
- Mouthed toys are washed in sanitizing solution and left to air dry
- All tables and surfaces should be disinfected (let dry if possible)
- Floors should be mopped with bleach solution twice a week (every day in the eating area)
- All frequently touched surfaces (railings, door handles, light switches etc.) are cleaned/disinfected twice a day
- Proper handwashing must be enforced.
  - Post <http://healthychildcare.unc.edu/resources/posters/> at every sink
  - Handwashing should take place: when entering room, after sneezing/coughing, after blowing nose, after use of toilet, before eating, after eating, before going home, when hands are visibly dirty
- Cough/sneeze into the elbow (when long sleeves) or into the shirt (when short sleeves), or cover with tissue. NOT into the hand!
- Routinely refill hand soap, paper towel, hand sanitizer

#### **Combat Misinformation**

- Share reliable resources with parents: NCDHHS and CDC are the best sources
  - Additional resources:
    - [StrongSchoolsNC Public Health Tool Kit.](#)
    - [Interim Guidance for Child Care Settings](#)
    - [Guidelines from the National Association of Episcopal Schools](#)

# Do You Know the Symptoms of COVID-19?

@NCDHHS

## SYMPTOMS CAN INCLUDE:



- Congestion or runny nose
- Headache
- Sore throat
- New loss of taste or smell



- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing



- Fever or chills
- Muscle pain
- Fatigue
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea