



DIOCESE OF HARRISBURG – Office of Catholic Schools

4800 Union Deposit Road • Harrisburg • Pennsylvania 17111-3710

(717) 657-4804 • www.hbgdiocese.org

Dear Parents and Guardians in our Diocese of Harrisburg Catholic Schools:

I pray this finds you well, and I pray that you and all our Catholic School communities will have joy and peace and find reason for gratitude to our Creator during this special season.

Please take time to read this letter so I may give you an update on the health and safety situation in our schools and important matters for consideration in the weeks to come.

Our 36 Catholic schools in the Diocese of Harrisburg have been open five days a week for in-person instruction, with an option for virtual learning, since school started and we are approaching the one-third mark of the school calendar. By all measurements, we have been successful, with an average, as I write, of 1.3 total Covid cases among staff and students per school thus far. This success comes from tremendous effort among our principals and staff in implementing the Diocesan Health and Safety Plan and from terrific communication and collaboration from our families. Thank you!

I continue to work with the Diocesan School Reopening Task Force, including four principals and two epidemiologists, as we navigate the choppy health-and-safety waters around us these days. As Covid cases are rising in Pennsylvania, we continually review our approach. Please know that, if public schools move to virtual instruction, we intend for our Catholic schools to remain **open** for in-person instruction, as long as we are able to mitigate the spread of Covid and operate effectively. We have had several schools close for a few days in order to clean and prevent potential spread of the virus, but, in each case, they have reopened and continued on very successfully. There is more information on our detailed approach [HERE](#), and, as you know, each school has its own site-specific plans as well.

An important point: to our knowledge, none of the Covid cases thus far have been contracted in our schools. We do believe that the majority of the cases can be traced to social gatherings outside of school. This is a vital point of emphasis: If you want our schools to remain open for in-person instruction -- and you have told us that you do -- we need your continued cooperation and vigilance, and we ask you to remember that our Catholic school communities require each of us to consider the greater good, and that greater good does not end at school dismissal time.

A reminder: The CDC has stated strongly that social distancing of six feet or more, wearing face masks, and regular hand-washing are key elements in the prevention of Covid spread (see more [HERE](#)).

As we approach Thanksgiving and Christmas, there are some special considerations to keep in mind.

As we have long said in our Health and Safety Plan, when our families travel to a state on the Pennsylvania Travel Quarantine list (found [HERE](#)) Catholic school students **must quarantine** from school for 14 days upon returning home. Please be proactive and communicative with your : these matters. Please know that this list is updated regularly and, if you are travelling when a state appears on the list, you will need to quaran test does not prevent the quarantine.

The State of Pennsylvania travel page, "Covid-19 Information for Travelers," also notes that non-essential travel to the neighboring states of West Virginia, New Jersey and Ohio should be avoided. However, like the State of Pennsylvania, we are not requiring quarantine for travel to those states, though it is recommended. Travel abroad does require a quarantine of 14 days as well.

If you have guests who are traveling to visit you from one of the states on the Pennsylvania Travel Quarantine list, a 14-day quarantine for our Catholic school students **is not required**, but it is recommended.

There are, however, prudent actions you can take to safeguard everyone's health in these situations. Here are some of those steps, in addition to the CDC steps listed above, presented in a list created with the help of the epidemiologists who consult with us:

- Set mutually-acceptable plans with guests before they arrive.
- Request that guests have a Covid test before travelling to you. Be certain that no guests are ill before they travel to you.
- Flu shots for guests and for your family in PA are strongly recommended.
- Have daily temperature and symptom checks for all.
- Have separate accommodations for overnight guests and the host family.
- Whenever possible, have gatherings outside; the next best option is to hold meals in the largest indoor space possible.

The CDC has established some best practices for social gatherings, to be found [HERE](#).

Please consult with your Catholic school for more details. Thank you for your understanding and cooperation, and for your support of our Catholic schools! May God bless you and your family.

Daniel Breen
Secretary for Education
Superintendent of Catholic Schools