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## **COVID-19 Preparedness Plan**

The following plan is our preferred response to safely operating Cotter Schools. This preparedness plan was created using the Minnesota Department of Health 2020-2021 Planning Guide for Schools, consultation with the Minnesota Department of Education, Cotter Leadership Team, and Winona county.

### **The following guidance includes sections addressing:**

- COVID-19 program coordinator
- Social distancing and minimizing exposure
- Face coverings
- Protecting vulnerable populations
- Hygiene practices
- Cleaning and materials handling
- Monitoring and excluding for illness
- Handling suspected or confirmed positive cases of COVID-19
- Water and ventilation systems
- Transportation
- Support mental health and wellness

### **COVID-19 program coordinator**

The Cotter Schools COVID-19 program coordinator is the point of contact for all buildings and departments. This person will communicate concerns, challenges, and lessons learned related to COVID-19 preventive activities as needed with employees, students/families, school and leadership, and local health officials. Questions or concerns regarding COVID-19 should be emailed to [covid19@cotterschools.org](mailto:covid19@cotterschools.org).

### **Social distancing and minimizing exposure**

Social distancing means keeping space between yourself and other people outside of your home. Social distancing is a critical tool in decreasing the spread of COVID-19. Create as much space between people as possible during the day, recognizing that it is not always feasible to have 6 feet of social distancing during primary instructional time in the classroom.

- 6 feet of spacing will be marked to remind students and employees to always stay 6 feet apart in lines and at other times they may congregate (e.g., arrival and dismissal, restrooms, locker rooms, etc.).
- Social distancing floor/seating markings in waiting and reception areas will be provided.
- Reduced class sizes and student desks will be placed 6 feet apart.
- Employees will monitor arrival and dismissal to curtail congregating and ensure students go straight from vehicle to their classroom, and vice versa.
- Nonessential visitors, volunteers, and activities involving external groups or organizations are restricted.
- Small cohort groups/pods/classrooms will stay together as much as possible throughout the day and from day to day. Mixing between cohort groups will be limited as much as possible (e.g., bathroom breaks, arrival and dismissal, free periods, recess, etc.).
- Watch for visual aids to illustrate appropriate spacing and traffic flow throughout the school building (e.g., designating hallways, staircases, or entrances as one-way and posting directional reminders on the walls and/or floor).
- Arrival and dismissal doors will be assigned to students to minimize crowding. You will be assigned a door to enter/exit, please abide by those assignments.
- Physical barriers (plexiglass) have been installed for protection at reception desks or other similar areas.
- Whenever possible we will hold physical education and music classes outside and encourage participants to spread out.
- Activities have been discontinued that bring together large groups of people or activities that do not allow for social distancing, including assemblies, Mass, in-person field trips, large group use of playground equipment simultaneously, etc.

### **Face coverings**

All students, employees, and other people present in school buildings are required to wear a face covering over their nose AND mouth. Face coverings are meant to protect other people in case the wearer does not know they are infected.

A face shield (a clear plastic barrier that covers the face) allows visibility of facial expressions and lip movements for speech perception and may be used as an alternative to a face covering in the following situations:

- Among students in grades 5-8, when wearing a face covering is problematic.

- By teachers (all grades), when wearing a face covering may impede the educational process.
- For employees, students, or visitors who cannot tolerate a face covering due to a developmental, medical, or behavioral health condition.
- For employees providing direct support student services, when a face covering impedes the service being provided.

For optimal protection, the face shield should extend below the chin anteriorly, to the ears laterally, and there should be no exposed gap between the forehead and the shield's headpiece.

Face coverings may be temporarily removed to eat or drink, outdoor activity when you can maintain 6 feet distance from others, and at the teachers' discretion.

Cotter Schools will provide each employee and student with 3 Cotter-branded face masks. Employees and students may choose to wear their own face covering as long as it meets the minimum requirement of covering the nose and mouth. Students may be asked to replace their facemask if it is distracting or offensive, a disposable mask will be given as a replacement.

### **Protecting vulnerable populations**

Families should inform the Cotter COVID Coordinator if your student or someone in your family is considered high risk for severe illness due to COVID-19.

### **Hygiene practices**

Cotter will ensure the availability of appropriate supplies (e.g., soap, hand sanitizer, paper towels, disinfectant wipes, and tissues) to support healthy hygiene behaviors and strategically place supplies in areas where they may be frequently used.

Daily hand hygiene routines are built into the daily school schedule for all students and employees, including handwashing and sanitation breaks during or between classroom activities. Handwashing is encouraged during key times including, but not limited to: arrival and dismissal; before, during, and after eating food; after using the bathroom; after blowing one's nose, coughing, or sneezing; after touching objects with bare hands that have been handled by other people.

### **Cleaning and materials handling**

Routine environmental cleaning and disinfection of high-touch surfaces and shared equipment will be done throughout the school day. Shared electronic devices, books, and other learning aids will be avoided when possible. Personal items will be kept in individually labeled cubbies, containers, desks, or lockers.

**Monitoring and excluding for illness**

One mitigation strategy alone will not eliminate the spread of COVID-19, but the thoughtful combination of multiple strategies taken together may substantially reduce the risk of transmission. All members of the school community, including employees, students, families, visitors, and others must be vigilant in monitoring for symptoms of illness and protect others by staying home when they are feeling ill and following COVID-19 specific exclusion and self-quarantine guidance when appropriate.

Employees and students are required to monitor their symptoms and temperature BEFORE coming to school. If you have a fever or feel ill, stay home!

Regular screening for symptoms can help to quickly identify signs of illness and help reduce exposure. Employees and students will be screened each day before they enter the building and are encouraged to self-monitor symptoms throughout the day. Employees or students who develop symptoms during the school day must notify the main office personnel. You should familiarize yourself with common [COVID-19 symptoms](#) so you can quickly recognize when action should be taken.

Refer to the “[Decision Tree for People with COVID-19 Symptoms in Youth, Student, and Child Care Programs](#)” to determine if students, families, or employees need to stay home.

**Handling suspected or confirmed positive cases of COVID-19**

The Cotter Schools COVID-19 Coordinator is responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns and will help coordinate with local health authorities regarding positive COVID-19 cases.

If you or someone in your family has symptoms of COVID-19, a positive test for COVID-19, or had close exposure to someone with COVID-19 within the last 14 days you are encouraged to contact the Cotter COVID-19 Coordinator at [covid19@cotterschools.org](mailto:covid19@cotterschools.org). Confidentiality guidelines and legal restrictions will be followed closely.

Dedicated isolated spaces for symptomatic people who are waiting to go home have been established. The isolated spaces are separate from areas where student health services will be delivered to those who are well and need routine types of care (e.g., medication administration or first aid). Dedicated isolation spaces will be cleaned between uses and as needed.

**Water and ventilation systems**

Water bottle fillers (drinking fountains have been turned off) will be cleaned and sanitized regularly. We encourage employees and students to bring their own water, use cups, or other alternative procedures.

Ventilation systems will be checked regularly to ensure proper operation and circulation of outdoor air as much as possible. If portable ventilation equipment like fans are used, take steps to minimize air from them blowing from one person directly at another person to reduce the potential spread of any airborne or aerosolized viruses.

When possible leave a window open in your classroom during the day and overnight to allow for fresh airflow.

### **Transportation**

All persons driving or riding in a school transportation vehicle must wear a face covering. Please reference the Face Coverings section above for additional details. An extra supply of face coverings will be maintained on school transportation vehicles for riders who forget to bring them.

While sitting in the vehicle maintain 6 feet of distance between the driver and all riders when possible. When done using, the driver needs to clean and disinfect the vehicle. Focus on frequently touched surfaces in the vehicle (e.g., surfaces near the driver's seat, hard seats, door handles, seat belt buckles, light and air controls, doors and windows, grab handles). When possible keep doors and windows open when cleaning the vehicle and between trips to let the vehicles thoroughly air out. Follow the symptom screening protocol outlined in the Monitoring and Excluding for Illness section, above, for any person entering a school transportation vehicle. People must stay home and not board transportation if they are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 or have been exposed to someone positive for COVID-19.

If a student or coach becomes ill or has a fever other transportation (a parent or guardian) will be arranged so the sick person doesn't ride home on the bus.

### **Support mental health and wellness**

The COVID-19 pandemic is causing a tremendous amount of stress, fear, and anxiety for many people. It's important we have access to the mental health care resources they need to stay well during this challenging time. We encourage employees, students, and families to talk with people they trust about their feelings and concerns regarding COVID-19.

Local mental health [resources](#) are available.

**Activities Department Preparedness Plan**

Seth Haun, Activities Director completed a [preparedness plan](#) for the athletic department.

**Band Department Preparedness Plan**

Andy Meurer, Director of Bands completed a [preparedness plan](#) for summer band practices.