



COTTER
S C H O O L S

COVID-19 Preparedness Plan (rev. 11-19-21)

As we approach the beginning of the 2021-2022 school year, prioritizing in-person learning while protecting the health and safety of our students, staff and families remains our top priority. In formulating our evolving response to the COVID-19 pandemic in our community, Cotter Schools continues to look to guidance and recommendations provided by the Minnesota Department of Health, the Minnesota Department of Education, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), as well as local COVID-19 activity in Winona county.

The following plan is our preferred response to safely operating Cotter Schools. Content adjustments may continue to be made as necessary to keep our entire community safe and healthy.

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.

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, especially among non-vaccinated persons.

- Three feet of physical distance is recommended within classrooms at all times.
- Outdoor classes and activities will be encouraged.

Face coverings (revised 11-19-21)

Due to recognition of the increased safety benefits of masking, students in K-12 classrooms who wear well-fitted masks, or are fully vaccinated, will not need to quarantine if they are named as a close contact of a positive case who was also masked. These requirements and recommendations will remain in effect until further notice.

Grades K–6:

- Students may remove their masks outside (recess, gym, outdoor classes, etc.).
- Students riding buses are required to wear masks.
- Vaccinated teachers may remove their masks when in the front of the room (distanced at least 6 feet from students) to enhance the instructional communication occurring in the classroom.
- In the K–6 indoor classroom setting, the close contact definition excludes students who were within 3 to 6 feet of an infected student where both students were correctly wearing well-fitting masks (i.e. entire classroom pods **will not need to quarantine and may remain in school** if both the infected student and the close contacts were masked).
- Students, teachers, and staff who have been **fully vaccinated do not need to stay home even if they have had recent close contact with a confirmed case so long as they do not have symptoms and do not test positive.**
- During after-school activities (including athletic practices and games), masks are recommended and encouraged for all participants and spectators.

Grades 7-12:

- Strong recommendation that all non-vaccinated students, teachers, staff and visitors wear a mask in school buildings at all times.
- Masks are recommended but optional for vaccinated students, teachers and staff in school buildings. Students must have a mask with them at all times in case a particular situation arises that requires a mask (close contact lab partner, assembly, etc.)
- Students riding buses or school vehicles are required to wear masks.
- All teachers are encouraged to wear masks when in close proximity to students (walking around the room, helping them 1 on 1). Vaccinated teachers are allowed and supported in removing their masks in the front of the room to enhance the instructional communication occurring in the classroom.
- Students, teachers, and staff who have been **fully vaccinated do not need to stay home even if they have had recent close contact with a confirmed case so long as they do not have symptoms and do not test positive.**

Overnight events

Participants in school-sponsored overnight events (trips, hotel stays) must fulfill one of three requirements for participation prior to leaving for the event:

1. Participant must show proof of full vaccination
2. Participant must show evidence of a lab-confirmed case of Covid-19 in the last 90 days
3. Participant must show results of a (-) lab-confirmed PCR test taken within 72 hours of leaving for the event

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.

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 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 most recent Decision Tree (found on the Cotter [website](#)) 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. 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. 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 3 feet of distance between the driver and all riders when possible. When done using, the driver needs to clean and disinfect the vehicle. 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.

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.