

Current Processes to Protect Students and Staff due to COVID-19

April 4, 2022

Dear Parents,

Below is an outline of our plan as of March 21, 2022. This is our plan as of today. As new data and information come in, there may be changes to our plan. We will keep you abreast of those changes as best we can and will continue to take all necessary steps to keep our children and staff safe.

Before delving into the details, I wanted to toss out a few caveats. Carle Auditory Oral School is a non-public special education program, meaning that we still fall under the directives of the Illinois State Board of Education and the governor's office. Additionally, as part of the Carle Health system, our program follows guidelines put forth by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), and Carle's Infection Prevention Team. As a result of all of these knowledgeable professionals' oversight of our COVID response, we anticipate that there will be more changes and adaptations as we continue to navigate the COVID situation. In the event of a mandated school or system-wide closure at a state or local level, we would need to close as well.

We don't have any plans to close down for any of these reasons, but the spring semester of 2020 taught us a lot about the types of things that can happen that are outside of our control. So, I want families to be aware that these types of situations could cause us to close the school.

Okay, back to the plan. Our plan is to remain onsite at CAOS full-time, that is, five full days each week. See below for how we plan to make that work while keeping students and staff safe.

PLANS TO OFFER PROTECTION THROUGH MASK USAGE

As of February 28th, the mask mandate for schools was lifted by the governor's office, Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) because of updated guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). CAOS staff and children continued to mask due to mask requirements for health care facilities from CDC, IDPH and Carle's Infection Prevention Team.

As of March 21st, CAOS was designated as a non-clinical space, whose mask requirements are governed by Champaign County's Risk Level. This level is re-calculated each week and drives masking guidelines for non-clinical spaces at Carle.

If the community risk level is low/ medium, masks are not required in non-clinical areas.

If the community risk level is high, masks are required for both staff and students.

At all times, CAOS respects parent and staff preference re: mask usage. If parents prefer that their child wears a mask at school, staff will support the child in consistent mask usage. Bullying or teasing regarding the choice to continue or discontinue masking has not been a challenge and will not be tolerated. At all times, staff have the option of wearing a mask at CAOS. Masks are made available to any staff, student or visitors that choose to wear one.

It should be noted that to reduce the risk of illness transmission, staff and children who are experiencing respiratory symptoms or other signs of illness will be asked to wear a mask when they are within 6 feet of others.

In the event that the COVID landscape changes and masks are again required, the following should be noted. Some students are medically unable to wear a mask, as determined by their physician and documented through a note from their doctor. If your child falls into this category, please talk with your child's doctor about it. If a child is unable to wear a mask at a time when masks are required, increased social distancing and an air purifier with a HEPA filter will be used to keep the child, as well as others in the room safe.

PLANS TO PROTECT FROM PEOPLE WITH COVID SYMPTOMS

The COVID illness policy remains in effect to exclude students and staff that are experiencing any of the 14 current symptoms related to COVID-19. As always, children need to be free from fever, diarrhea and vomiting for 24 hours without the aid of medication in order to return to school. Additionally, children and staff who are experiencing any COVID symptoms will be asked to stay at home until documentation of a negative COVID test result is provided to the school office. Alternatively, children can choose to quarantine at home for 5 days and until symptoms improve, or obtain a note from a physician indicating that the symptoms are related to an alternative diagnosis and there is no clinical suspicion of COVID-19. Staff return to work policy is dictated by guidance from Carle's Infection Prevention team.

In the event that someone is diagnosed with COVID, the current plan is that staff and families who are identified as close contacts will be informed. The person's identity will not be shared. A close contact is an individual that is known to have been in contact with the individual that tested positive for COVID for at least 15 minutes within a 24 hour period.

PLANS TO PROTECT PEOPLE THROUGH VACCINATION AND COVID TESTING

Carle staff members are required to be vaccinated against COVID-19, or to obtain a medical or religious exemption and engage in weekly COVID testing in order to be employed within the Carle system.

Volunteers, practicum students and interns are required to be fully vaccinated in order to be placed at Carle.

Students are encouraged to be vaccinated against COVID-19 as soon as they are eligible.

PLANS TO PROTECT THROUGH CLEANING

Our EVS staff has obtained a new backpack vacuum cleaner with HEPA filters that will allow him to better clean all of the carpeted areas of our school.

High touch surfaces (doorknobs, elevator buttons, and office equipment) will be cleaned each evening.

Toys, tables and chairs will be cleaned weekly using a cleaning substance known to kill COVID germs and allowed to air dry.