

1/28/21 Mercy COVID-19 Update

Dear Mercy School families,
Assalamu Alaikum,

As you know, Mercy School Board and administration have focused intensely on providing students and staff members with a safe learning environment. This includes following the guidelines put forth by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH), and the Oklahoma State School Board Association (OSSBA). Due to the plethora of information on COVID 19, Mercy School would like to share in this letter the resources that can help Mercy families to stay updated and informed about COVID 19.

- **New COVID-19 testing rules:**

- COVID-19 has surprised us in so many ways. Children rarely present with fever as recent data suggest, and that is why temperature checks will not help to identify those COVID infections who don't have fevers. Some children with COVID presented with no symptoms (after being exposed to a family member), and other kids presented with nonspecific symptoms of hoarseness, stomach pain, diarrhea, or headaches, without any muscle aches or fever.
- Recent data (see link below) suggests that mask-wearing, good air flow and frequent rapid tests are more important than surface cleaning, temperature checks and plexiglass. For that reason, **Mercy school board and administration highly encourage students and staff to have low threshold for testing to help with sick contacts tracing and quarantining. Testing should be done in the following circumstances:**
 - i. **Any exposure to a sick contact** requires a COVID-19 test IMMEDIATELY.
 - Sick contact exposure is defined as "Whoever is within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 15 min, starting 48 hours prior to the person getting sick or diagnosed with COVID19." according to Mercy School COVID-19 FAQ
 - Sick contacts should remain quarantined for 7 days and have a REPEAT COVID test on day 5 after exposure.
 - ii. **Any body with ANY of the following symptoms:** Fever, runny nose, cough, sore throat, hoarseness, red eyes, fatigue, muscle aches, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, or loss of taste or smell.
 - iii. Please see COVID-19 quarantine rules below.
- **You can get tested for COVID-19 for free and without a doctor's notes and without any symptoms at the following location. Results are usually available within 12hrs:**

- i. OU Medicine Drive Thru Testing Center. Visit the following link to make appointment: <https://covidtest.ouhealth.com>

https://www.wsj.com/articles/new-playbook-for-covid-19-protection-emerges-after-year-of-study-missteps-11611680950?st=dt23aogvm63lplg&reflink=article_whatsapp_share

- **Understanding COVID-19 Alert System:**

- The Center for Disease Control (CDC), releases every day the average daily number of COVID cases per 100,000 in the last 7days. **As of today, the average daily cases for the State of Oklahoma is 66 per 100K, ranking Oklahoma as number 7th in the nation! This data is updated on daily basis** on this link: https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-datatracker/#cases_casesper100klast7days .
- Mercy School institute is utilizing the Oklahoma State Department of Health's weekly COVID-19 Alert System as a factor to aid determining appropriate safety protocols for our school each week. **This data is updated weekly at the end of Friday of every week** on this link: <https://www.ossba.org/resources/coronavirus/covid-19-map/>
- The following link shows the 7day weekly average comparison for all counties in Oklahoma. Again, **this data is updated weekly at the end of Friday of every week. Mercy School is in Oklahoma County which has an average daily number of COVID cases of 60 per 100K, for the week of Jan 14th to 21st, 2021 (down from 94 per 100K from the prior week):** <https://www.ossba.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Weekly-COVID-spreadsheet-Jan-21-1.pdf>
- There are two color-coded maps for COVID 19 risk status for all counties in the State of Oklahoma, one developed by The Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) and the other one developed by the Oklahoma State School Board Association (OSSBA). It is important to understand the difference between the two maps to be able to make the right decision. Oklahoma county is in the red zone according to the OSSBA map. There is not a single county in red according to the OSDH since that designation is given using different criteria. They designated red only if COVID patients represent >40% of staffed hospital beds! The following video helps to understand the color-coded map: <https://vimeo.com/480425644>
- The suggested safety protocol for this color coded risk stratification is in the following link:
- <https://sde.ok.gov/sites/default/files/documents/files/Oklahoma%20School%20Safety%20Protocols.pdf>

- **COVID 19 vaccine resources:**

- The Oklahoma City-County Health Department (OCCHD) has put together information regarding COVID vaccine. You can access this information here: <https://www.occhd.org/covid-19vaccine>

- The Oklahoma State Department of health (OSDH) has launched a website to allow people to **pre-register and schedule COVID vaccine** according to their risk status. You can the pre registration link here:
<https://ok-vras.powerappsportals.us/>
- The following COVID 19 vaccine 5min short videos are very informative and are worth watching. They are prepared by Dr. Waseem Ostwani, a pediatric critical care specialist in Toledo.
 - https://youtu.be/HT6_cp95ixw
 - <https://youtu.be/PThDEsGK5Pw>
 - <https://youtube.com/watch?v=0u6j9pkuZrQ&feature=share>
- **COVID-19 Quarantine rules:**
 - Mercy school follows the guidelines put forth by the Oklahoma State Department of Health. In summary,
 - **What do you do if you have been exposed to someone with COVID, but not having symptoms (i.e. sick contacts):**
 - You should stay home for 14 days from the date of last contact with the COVID patient, if possible.
 - If you remain free of symptoms up to day 10, your quarantine can end at that point, but you should continue to monitor for symptoms and wear a face covering when around others until at least 14 days after last exposure.
 - If you receive a negative test result from a sampling on day 5 after exposure or later, you can end quarantine on day 7 as long as you do not have any symptoms. You should continue to monitor symptoms and wear a face covering when around others until at least 14 days after last exposure. (On December 2nd, 2020, the CDC approved this decrease in the length of time a person must quarantine if they come in close contact with someone who tests positive for COVID-19. The CDC approved this change based on months of research, which revealed that only a small percentage of COVID cases emerge more than five days after exposure. We are pleased their adjustment will allow us to continue to protect students and staff, while also decreasing the amount of instructional time they must miss.)
 - **What to do if you test positive or are diagnosed with COVID-19:**
 - **If you have symptoms and are NOT hospitalized:** Stay home or isolated:
 - At least 10 days since you first felt sick.
 - Once 10 days has passed since you first felt sick, you will also need to be fever free for 24 hours, without the use of medicine that lowers fevers; AND your symptoms need to be getting better before it's safe for you to leave the house and return to your normal routine.

- **If you have symptoms and are hospitalized:** Stay home or isolated:
 - At least 20 days since you first felt sick.
 - Once 20 days has passed since you first felt sick, you will also need to be fever free for 24 hours, without the use of medicine that lowers fevers; AND your symptoms need to be getting better before it's safe for you to leave the house and return to your normal routine.
- **If you have symptoms and a weakened immune system:** Stay home or isolated:
 - At least 20 days since you first felt sick.
 - Once 20 days has passed since you first felt sick, you will also need to be fever free for 24 hours, without the use of medicine that lowers fevers; AND your symptoms need to be getting better before it's safe for you to leave the house and return to your normal routine.
- **If you have no symptoms at time of positive test:** Stay home or isolated:
 - At least 10 days since you had your test done.
 - If you have a weakened immune system, you should stay home for at least 20 days from the test date.
 - If you develop symptoms, you will need to follow the guidance above for the type of symptoms you develop or your immune system category. Your isolation count will now be from the day you first felt sick.
- **More steps to protect your family and your community during your quarantine at home:**
 - **Isolate yourself at home.** Do not go to work, school, or any other place outside the home.
 - **Stay away from other people in your home.** As much as possible, stay in a separate room and use a separate bathroom, if available. COVID patients should never be in common house areas like kitchen
 - **Wear a facemask if you need to be around other people,** and cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Wash hands thoroughly afterward.
 - **Avoid sharing personal household items.**
 - **Wash your hands often** with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol. Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands.
 - **People with underlying medical conditions and weakened immune systems are at greater risk for severe illness.** Continue your medicines and treatment plans as directed by your

healthcare provider. Contact with your healthcare provider regarding your symptoms and concerns. If you are worried about your symptoms, do not delay emergency care.

- **If you need emergency medical care** during your isolation at home, **call 911** and let them know that you have tested positive for COVID-19.

Mercy School's ongoing commitment to conduct regular deep cleaning, to encourage frequent handwashing and to promote social distancing when possible will be enforced as well. If you have questions about these guidelines, please contact Mercy school office or refer to the Mercy School Institute COVID 19 FAQ document. There is nothing more important to Mercy School Board and administration than the safety and health of our students and staff. We appreciate your cooperation and support.

Allah knows best!

Mercy School Board and Administration