

**St. Helen School COVID19 Health & Safety Plan 2022-2023 School Year**

**Revised and Effective August 23, 2022**

Welcome back to St. Helen School! We are eagerly preparing for the 2022-2023 Academic School year and we are excited to welcome everyone back in person. Our gratitude to our SHS community and all of you for doing a phenomenal job in following COVID19 guidelines so that our 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 school years could operate as safely as possible. Thank you for your cooperation and patience as even now, current COVID19 guidance continues to evolve this summer, especially for our school aged children.

The following is our COVID19 Health & Safety Operating Plan for 2022-2023 based on current public health guidance, the experience of our SHS community and the Archdiocese Operating Plan. We will continue to revisit procedures as guidelines evolve; in future versions, we will note updates in blue.

Safety remains our highest priority and we are committed to delivering a high quality education. This continues to be an ever-evolving situation and we appreciate your flexibility and patience.

* **With COVID19 symptoms, please stay home and contact your doctor for testing.**
* **For any positive case or urgent need, please notify the SHS office.**
* **For non-emergency questions, please use our SHS Health & Safety Committee email (**[***health@sthelenchicago.org***](mailto:health@sthelenschool.org)***)***
* **The CDC recommends COVID-19 primary series vaccines for everyone ages 6 months and older, and COVID-19 boosters for everyone ages 5 years and older, if eligible. People who are moderately or severely immunocompromised have specific recommendations for COVID-19 vaccines, including boosters.**
* **Masks are welcome and optional for all students, faculty and visitors, except for** [**specific situations**](https://www.archchicago.org/coronavirus/reopening)**.**
* **School events, gatherings, and volunteering opportunities will return in 2022-2023. These are critical for the health of SHS and our families.**
* **Detailed COVID19 protocols, isolation, quarantine can be found** [**here**](https://schools.archchicago.org/curriculum-and-resources/back-to-school)**.**

Sincerely,

SHS COVID19 Health & Safety Committee

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# Summary: Updates since 2021-2022 Academic Year

* In the spring of 2022 and again in August 2022, several guidelines related to COVID19 were updated by the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention. The Archdiocese and Chicago Catholic Schools follow that guidance.
* Those eligible for COVID19 vaccinations have expanded:
  + Those over the age of 5 became eligible for boosters
  + Those under the age of 5 became eligible for the COVID19 vaccine
* The City of Chicago, following CDC guidance, examines surveillance metrics at the [Community Level](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/covid-by-county.html), examining additional metrics in addition to positivity rates.
* Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Chicago welcome masks and masks are optional for all students, faculty and visitors.
* If eligible, please consider getting vaccinated and boosted - both for COVID19 and flu. As information regarding vaccinations for ages 2-12 and boosters for ages 12 and up become available, we will share more information.

## What is the SHS Health & Safety Committee?

In 2020, the Archdiocese encouraged each school to form a Health & Safety Committee to develop localized guidance for operating during the COVID19 pandemic:

* The Health & Safety Committee includes: three parents with relevant health care experience, Assistant Principal Kathleen Johnson and building operations.
  1. Relative expertise: Parental expertise on the committee includes: pediatric medicine, emergency medicine, public health and policy.
* The H&S Committee will meet as necessary to help triage inquiries and make recommendations based on emerging guidance, questions, and suggestions.
* The goal of the H&S Committee is to implement public health guidelines and Archdiocese guidance for our school.
* All information shared with a member of the H&S Committee is considered confidential.

# COVID19 Procedures and Protocols

## Positive Case, Close Contact, Quarantine, School Operations

* St. Helen follows our[Archdiocese of Chicago School Reopening Plan](https://schools.archchicago.org/curriculum-and-resources/back-to-school), which includes the current process and procedures related to COVID19, quarantine, isolation, as well as other procedures such as lunchtime, air circulation, cleaning.
* If we experience a significant number of new cases, we will consider options appropriate for the circumstances.

## Vaccinations

* The CDC recommends COVID-19 primary series vaccines for everyone ages 6 months and older, and COVID-19 boosters for everyone ages 5 years and older, if eligible. People who are moderately or severely immunocompromised have specific recommendations for COVID-19 vaccines, including boosters.
* COVID19 vaccinations are not required at this time to attend school.

## Communications re COVID19 to SHS Community

* To balance privacy and transparency, as well as to foster dialogue and inquiry, please feel free to send any questions, clarification to the H&S committee: ***health@sthelenchicago.org****.*
  1. Note:
     1. The H&S Committee will treat information as private and anonymous.
     2. The H&S Committee will NOT respond to emails from the email box. Instead, the emails will help us understand common questions and concerns.
     3. The email will be checked regularly but is not for urgent matters.
* **For urgent matters such as potential COVID19 exposure or a positive test result, contact tracing, suspected illness, or other illness, please contact the main office directly – this ensures procedure expediency as well as privacy (see “Infection Protocols” below).**
* There will be an email communication from the main office if there is a positive case (not from Health & Safety):
  1. Faculty and staff are notified first, then the classroom of the positive case, then the school community at large
  2. Personal health information is confidential; since we cannot disclose positive case(s), we encourage families make decisions with information that you have
* We will use the weekly newsletter, parents meetings, or post to facebook to provide clarifications or address non-urgent, school-wide issues.

## What We Can All Do to Stay Healthy

* We understand that everyone has COVID19 fatigue. Please continue to practice vigilance and recommit to good habits.
* Wash your hands.
* Follow national, state and city guidelines, particularly for travel, indoor and outdoor gatherings.
* Please consider getting the COVID19 vaccine if you are eligible.
* Please consider staying up to date with annual flu vaccines for all ages as well.
* Consult the [Chicago Travel Advisory](https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/sites/covid-19/home/emergency-travel-order.html) for quarantine guidance for any travel that students take.

## Cold, Flu, Allergy Season - Similar Symptoms to COVID19

* The start of school and fall season often mean seasonal allergies, colds, viruses. Unfortunately, with the COVID19 pandemic and with many symptoms similar across these conditions, we all need to proceed with the highest level of caution.
* If your child has any symptoms of illness, we do need your help in coming to pick up your child promptly when we call and to talk to your doctor (please see section on “Infection Protocols”). We understand that many of these symptoms are normal for less severe or routine illnesses and we do need to proceed with heightened caution.
* Please consider getting an annual flu vaccine, for both parents and students.

# School Events / Volunteers

* 2022-2023 allows us to bring back events and gatherings! They are a critical source of support for the school and our community. More information will be distributed in weekly newsletters.
* We encourage volunteers to be up to date with COVID19 vaccinations, in addition to Archdiocese required volunteer training (see office and handbook).
* Teachers may also communicate about opportunities to volunteer in their classroom.

**Thank you SHS Community for helping us ensure we have as safe an environment as possible.**

General resources and sources that inform the St. Helen COVID19 Health & Safety Operating Plan:

[Archdiocese Reopening With Trust](https://schools.archchicago.org/curriculum-and-resources/back-to-school)

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Resources on COVID19](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html)

[City of Chicago guidance for COVID19](https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/sites/covid-19/home.html)