



VGV Health and Safety Guidance for the 2021-22 School Year

(Sources used: RIDoH, RIDE, CDC, PPSD)

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Overview

The purpose of this document is to outline health and safety guidance for Village Green Virtual School (VGV) for the 2021-2022 school year. This document is based on [guidance](#) provided by the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) and the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH); guidance in this document is not intended to conflict or supersede guidance provided by RIDE or RIDOH, but rather provide greater detail on VGV specific policies. This document will be updated as external guidance or internal policy are adjusted. We will continue to monitor public health conditions and CDC recommendations and adjust this guidance accordingly. Additional guidance will be provided to principals/supervisors and staff members.

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A. Spacing and Grouping

Spacing and grouping guidelines are affected by vaccine eligibility and public health conditions. As of the drafting of this guidance, individuals aged twelve and older are eligible to be vaccinated. Guidance will change as public health conditions changes and/or vaccine eligibility expands.

1. Learning Center settings

All LC groups where students are eligible for full vaccination, physical distancing is not required. In non-stable groups where students are not eligible for vaccines, at least three feet of distance is recommended as much as possible. As of the drafting of this guidance, vaccine eligibility is for individuals twelve and older. As such, if a stable group model is not followed physical distancing of at least three feet is recommended as much as possible.

School staff are allowed to travel between different classrooms at all grade levels. Teachers should continue to have seating charts with assigned student seats as much as possible to assist with case investigation and contact tracing if needed.

The use of physical barriers in classrooms is no longer recommended by the CDC.

2. Shared Spaces and Cafeteria

Outdoor learning experiences and dining are encouraged whenever possible. For stable groups, at least three feet of physical distance between stable groups is recommended for indoor activities in shared spaces. Please note: If schools choose to distance stable groups less than 6 feet, there may be an increase in the number of close contacts between the stable pods if there was a positive COVID-19 case. **Please note: until further notice, cafeteria dining will remain closed to limit travel.**

Schools may use cafeterias for meal service and dining. However, schools can utilize combinations of cafeteria space and classroom space for dining depending on available space and coverage. When dining, the following spacing guidelines should be followed:

- Stable groups: students should have consistent, assigned seating with members of their stable group where possible. Students should be spaced at least 2-3 feet apart with six feet between tables.
- Non-stable groups: students should have consistent, assigned seating. Students should be spaced three feet apart.

B. Cleaning, Disinfecting, and Hand Hygiene

Schools should utilize the [CDC Guidance](#) for cleaning, disinfection, and hand hygiene. As of 7/20/21, this guidance includes:

- Limit sharing of high touch objects that are difficult to regularly clean (such as, electronic devices, pens, pencils, books, games, art supplies, lab equipment).
- Individuals should wash their hands, particularly at key times such as after bathroom breaks, before lunch, after playing outside, or after using shared materials.
- Provide hand sanitizer, particularly near frequently touched surfaces.

1. Cleaning protocols

Standard cleaning

VGV have hired additional staff members who will provide additional cleaning throughout the day for school buildings. Staff members will clean high touch surfaces and objects (such as, door handles, sink handles, drinking fountains) at least once a day or as often as needed (for example, when visibly dirty).

“Level 2” Cleaning

In the event of a probable COVID-19 case during the school day (i.e., a staff member or student displays symptoms indicative of a probable COVID-19 case in a school building), staff members or students should be temporarily relocated to another space in the building. Cleaning staff will conduct a cleaning of the classroom including a cleaning of high touch surfaces.

“Level 3” Cleaning

In the event of a confirmed positive COVID-19 case where the student or staff member were in the building within the last 24 hours, cleaning staff will conduct a “Level 3”, deep cleaning. This includes a deep cleaning and disinfection of all surfaces within the classroom.

C. Face Coverings (Masks)

1. Start of year face covering policy

For the beginning of the 2021-2022 school year, all school-based staff members and students will be required to wear masks indoors, regardless of vaccination status. This guidance is subject to change depending on changes in public health conditions.

Mask use is generally not required outdoors; however, if outdoor activities involve sustained close contact between individuals not in the same stable group (<3 feet distance for 15 minutes or more), masks should be worn by adults and students who are not vaccinated.

Mask-wearing exceptions will be made for the following categories of people:

1. A person with a disability who cannot wear a mask, or cannot safely wear a mask, because of a disability as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.).
2. A person for whom wearing a mask would create a risk to workplace health, safety, or job duty as determined by the relevant workplace safety guidelines or federal regulations.

Staff members who believe they qualify for an exception under items 1 and 2 must contact Rochelle Baker (rbaker@vgcs.org) to review and approve/deny the request. Similarly, students should contact their school nurse to review and approve/deny the request.

Vendors who are in schools on a consistent basis (e.g.,) will follow these guidelines regarding face coverings. Visitors to schools will need to wear masks regardless of vaccination status.

2. Ongoing monitoring of face covering policy

Based on public health conditions, we may adjust masking policies during the year such that fully vaccinated staff members and students do not need to wear masks. Should that occur, staff members and students will need to provide proof of vaccination status or other medical documentation certifying that an individual does not need to wear a mask if they do not want to wear a mask. To ensure staff member and student safety, the following procedures will be followed for staff members and students to submit proof of vaccination status:

Staff members:

- Staff members will submit a scanned copy of their vaccination card to VGV front desk via email, fax, or in-person drop off. Exact submission procedures are still being finalized and will be communicated.

Students:

- Students will submit a scanned copy of their vaccination card (or bring a copy of their vaccination card for review) to their school nurse.

Individuals' vaccination status will not be shared outside of staff in the main office of VGV. Moreover, staff members or students should not inquire about the vaccination status of colleagues or classmates.

D. Screening Students and Staff Members

Students and staff members who are sick and/or have symptoms that indicate a probable COVID-19 case should stay home. Similarly, unvaccinated household contacts must quarantine until the results of the COVID-19 for the probable case are known.

Staff and parents/guardians are strongly encouraged to monitor their children for symptoms of infectious illness every day through home-based symptom screening. Students and staff members who are sick or have symptoms should not attend school. Schools must post Symptom Signage at the entrance(s) of their building.

E. School Visitors

Visitors may enter the school building. A 30-day log of all visitors is strongly recommended. Logs should document the date, contact phone number, and arrival/departure times. All visitors must

¹ Per CDC guidance, in general, people are considered fully vaccinated: 2 weeks after their second dose in a 2-dose series, such as the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines, or 2 weeks after a single-dose vaccine, such as Johnson & Johnson's Janssen vaccine.

comply with the LEA's or school's COVID-19 policies and protocols. All visitors must wear masks at all times.

F. Before and After school Programming

All programs located at the school and sponsored by the school, the program must follow the same health and safety guidelines the school is following.

G. Field Trips

Field trips can resume as long as the necessary COVID-19 health and safety policies are met. Stable groups should remain consistent during field trips. This means the same classroom groups participate as a stable group in field trip activities as much as possible.

H. Busing and Student Transportation

There are no capacity restrictions for school transportation. It is recommended that household members sit together in the same seat when possible. Bus staff should continue to create distance between children on school buses when possible. Students using the bus are scheduled as a stable group, and the bus group is considered its own stable group.

Masks are required by federal order on school buses and other forms of public transportation in the United States.

Bus personnel should continue to have seating charts with assigned student seats as much as possible to assist with case investigation and contact tracing if needed. When feasible, the same group of students should be assigned to the same bus every day. Students are encouraged to ride the same bus to and from school whenever possible.

Open windows to improve ventilation when it does not create a safety hazard. When a passenger is confirmed to have COVID-19 (tests positive), there may be up to twenty-nine close contacts of the person who may need to quarantine. On a bus, close contacts of a confirmed case are those who were seated two rows in front, two rows behind, and the same five rows on opposite side of the aisle as the positive case (see the Outbreak Response Playbook: PK-12 for reference). Anyone within six feet of the individual for greater than 15 minutes is a close contact.

I. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

VGV has received an adequate supply of PPE for all classrooms and office spaces:

- Reusable masks to distribute to all staff members and students.
- Disposable masks for students or staff members who have forgotten their cloth masks.
- Hand sanitizer for all classrooms, offices, and shared spaces where sinks/handwashing stations are not available.
- Disinfectant spray for all classrooms, offices, and shared spaces.

- Signage for entryways and hallways to support social distancing.
- Face shields upon request.
- Gowns and gloves for school nurses.

Schools will receive a supply of the above to cover all classrooms, with replenishment happening through the school year. Staff members should contact their principal or supervisor if additional PPE is required, which will be replenished from the central warehouse. These supplies are to be requested via “Google Docs.”

If any staff have underlying immunocompromised conditions, they may wish to consult their doctor about any additional PPE. When in close contact with, or treating, a patient suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19, recommended PPE includes N-95 respirator (or face mask if N-95 is unavailable), eye protection (goggles or face shield), gloves, and gown.

J. Ventilation

To support building ventilation during the COVID-19 pandemic, all classrooms have been equipped with air purifiers utilizing MERV13 filters that meet or exceed CDC recommendations regarding air changes per hour (ACH). VGV has an adequate allotment of replacement filters for air purifier units; school custodians will change when a replacement is necessary.

In addition, for school-buildings with air conditioning we will be increasing outside air intake, as well as running the buildings on “occupied” mode for longer periods of time prior to the school day. Classrooms without air conditioning may utilize window fans to increase airflow as well.

K. Responding to Students and Staff Members who are Sick

Schools should continue to follow [The Outbreak Response Protocols: PreK-12](#). Students and staff members who are sick and/or have symptoms that indicate a probable COVID-19 case should stay home. Similarly, unvaccinated household contacts must quarantine until the results of the COVID-19 for the probable case are known.

1. Incident Response

If a student or staff member is sick is a probable COVID-19 case, they should not come to school or work and get tested. If a student or school-based staff member test positive, he or she should contact his/her school nurse; central office-based staff members should contact Donna O’Connor.

If a student exhibits COVID-19 symptoms that indicate a probable case at school, the student should be relocated to the school’s isolation room. If a staff member exhibits COVID-19 symptoms, he or she should notify his/her supervisor and go home for the day before getting tested.

2. Cleaning and Disinfection

See the [Cleaning Protocols](#)

Additional guidance can be found at [CDC: Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility](#).

3. Quarantining

Schools should continue to follow the [RI quarantine requirements](#). Based upon the current case rates, the limited spread within K-12 settings, the high vaccination rates in Rhode Island, and the importance of in-person learning, VGV will follow the “7 day with testing” quarantine option. This option is the least disruptive to students' education and to families' lives. With this option, close contact individuals can return to school on Day 8 with a negative PCR test from Day 5 or later and should also watch for symptoms until 14 days after exposure. RIDOH may recommend longer quarantine lengths in certain situations.

Schools will continue to provide seating charts and contact information to the R.I. Department of Health if positive COVID-19 cases arise amongst their staff or students.

If there is a positive case within a stable pod, it is likely that the entire stable pod will need to quarantine if no physical distancing was done.

If students share an outdoor space (such as recess), case investigation will be done at the individual level to try to determine any close contacts.

An exposed person (close contact) who was within six feet of the infected person for at least 15 minutes over 24 hours needs to quarantine. Individuals do not need to quarantine in the following situations:

1. An individual who is fully vaccinated (i.e., is 14 days from receiving all doses of an FDA-approved or WHO-approved COVID-19 vaccine).
2. An individual who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 during the past 90 days: or
3. A K-12 student if all of the following criteria are met:
 - *K-12 students*: both the infected person and exposed close contact are K-12 students.
 - *Indoor classroom*: the close contact exposure occurred in an indoor K-12 classroom.
 - *Physical distance*: at least three feet of physical distance was maintained at all times during the close contact exposure.
 - *Face masks*: both the exposed (close contact) student and the infected student wore a face mask at all times during the close contact exposure; and
 - All recommended K-12 mitigation strategies were in place at the school when the exposure occurred: promoting vaccination; consistent and correct mask use; physical distancing; screening testing plan to promptly identify cases, clusters, and outbreaks; ventilation; handwashing and respiratory etiquette; staying home when sick and getting tested; contact tracing, in combination with isolation and quarantine; and cleaning and disinfection.

Note: exception three only applies to K-12 students, not staff members or adults

L. School-Based Testing

VGV will offer weekly asymptomatic testing for students and staff members on a voluntary basis.