



St. Mary's Academy Charter School Parent and Public Covid-19 Notice

SMACS will designate a group that is responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns. Individuals should call 361-358-5601 extension 1000 (school office) during normal business hours to be connected with the appropriate designated staff member. If you cannot wait for the school business hours, please call your family medical provider or 911 if an emergency.

*Every decision made will take into
consideration the latest guidance and direction
from local, state and federal authorities.*

Updated: 7/29/2021

Dear St. Mary's Academy Charter School Families,

Based upon guidance and direction from the Texas Education Agency and local and state officials, we are moving forward with plans to reopen our school for in-person instruction for the fall semester and want to provide you with our commitment to student and staff safety. We have remained in contact with local, state, and federal authorities and have determined all students will learn in a face-to-face traditional school model. The remote learning platform will be reserved for a student subject to a written quarantine order from an authorized official or medical professional for the time specified in the written order. We are committed to providing you the most up to date information as we learn more and seek to clarify how these changes will affect our school year.

This document provides guidance on health protocols, school day operations, instructional guidelines, and continuity of services plan in the event of a school closure. In addition to these protocols, we will implement COVID-19 Action Levels on our campus. This system will include adjustments to arrival and dismissal procedures, child nutrition services, and campus organization. We will implement new and more intense health and hygiene practices, along with increased cleaning, training and reminders about safe and healthy practices. New protocols including restrictions on campus visitors, deliveries and student gatherings are in place for the protection of all students and staff.

Campus and program specific guidelines will be communicated as we get closer to the start of school. We will communicate specific information about efforts related to health and safety. We ask that you take time to read through this guidance document and reach out with your feedback or questions. We know we will get through this crisis and we look forward to when we are all back in our regular routines. We are committed to providing your child an excellent education.

Thank you and stay safe!

Hirma Elizondo, Principal

Stan Simonson, Superintendent



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Health Protocols

SMACS continues to monitor the spread of COVID-19 and receives regular guidance from Texas Governor Greg Abbott, Texas Education Agency Commissioner Mike Morath and other local, state and federal agencies including the CDC regarding response, prevention and mitigation efforts. This guidance will continue to evolve based on COVID-19 conditions across the state and our local community. We will educate our students, staff, and community members about the importance of social distancing; frequent hand washing; covering a cough or sneeze; not touching one's eyes, nose, or mouth; staying home when sick; and other measures to help prevent the spread of communicable diseases. Hand sanitizer will be available at every building entrance and in every classroom. SMACS Custodial Staff will continue to routinely clean and disinfect all facilities, including frequently touched objects and surfaces with CDC approved germicidal agents which are effective against multiple disease causing viruses and bacteria.

Covid-19 Daily Self-Screening

All parents, students and staff will be required to self-screen daily prior to entering any SMACS facility.

Parents/Guardians can help by keeping children who are sick home. If a child has COVID-19 symptoms, under TEA guidelines, the child cannot return to school until at least ten days have passed since symptoms first appeared, and at least three days (72 hours) have passed since recovery (resolution of fever without the use of fever reducing medications); and the individual has improvement in symptoms (cough, shortness of breath, etc.)

Social Distancing

Students and staff will be asked to maintain a distance of 3-6 feet when feasible.

Face Coverings/ Sneeze Guards

At this time, masks are optional but strongly encouraged and it is up to the individual or parent/guardian of minor children if a mask will be worn. If State, Local, or Federal guidelines change to require Face Masks, SMACS will enforce the wearing of Masks. Sneeze guards are available for all students and it will be left up to the classroom teacher if they will be used in an individual classroom. A parent or guardian may request their individual student be provided with a sneeze guard on their desk.

Temperature Checks

Daily temperature checks of all students at school will be performed as long as it is beneficial. SMACS has no-touch infrared thermometers for screening symptomatic students and staff.

Registered Nurse

There is a part-time registered nurse on campus. The SMACS school nurse will continue to send students home who have a fever, diarrhea, are vomiting, lose sense of taste or smell, or display significant symptoms of illness. Please refer to pages 5 - 6 of this document. The nurse and her appointed team members will contact trace COVID positive individuals who have been determined to be on campus. The team will also be available to Rapid Test staff members, upon request.

Response to COVID-19 Cases

SMACS staff will initiate the SMACS Isolation Plan in the event of a suspected COVID-19 case on campus. In working with federal, state, local health ordinance, and district authorities, a course of action will be determined regarding necessary communication, required sanitation, possible closures, and contact tracing. Upon notification of a lab confirmed COVID-19 case on a campus, the district will communicate with teachers, staff, and families of students who were potentially exposed.

School Counselors

School counselors are available to address students' academic needs and students' and staff social, emotional, mental health needs. SMACS also has a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) under contract to help students' and staff social, emotional, mental health needs, when determined necessary.



School Day Operations

Campus Cleaning

- Campuses will be cleaned throughout the instructional day
- Classrooms will be equipped for cleaning between transition of students
- Age appropriate signage for proper hygiene practices will be posted throughout the buildings.

Arrival/Dismissal

- Multiple entry/exit points will be established.
- Students will report to their assigned area daily.

- All areas of the building (cafeteria, larger classrooms, common areas, etc.) will be utilized to limit the size of student groupings.
- Students will be released straight from their assigned areas.

Transitions

- Classroom doors will be left open to reduce high touch area when possible.
- Traffic patterns will be established throughout the campus that separate individuals to the greatest extent possible.
- Staff and signage will be posted to reinforce physical distance expectations.

Meal Service

- Students will eat meals in the cafeteria building. Meal times will be staggered.
- Serving areas will be cleaned as students' transition.
- Campuses will use a variety of options for seating arrangements to maximize social distancing.

School Calendar

SMACS plans to utilize the Board approved 2021-2022 calendar. However, SMACS is prepared to modify the calendar. Ample notice and communication will be provided if a calendar change is needed.

Continuity of Services

In the event of a school closure, SMACS is prepared to provide Remote Instruction. All instructional staff has been fully trained in delivery of remote instruction. SMACS will provide computing devices to all students upon their parent/guardian written request. Meal pickup will be available as allowed by the National School Lunch Program. The school nurse will be available remotely to address student health concerns, if appropriate. School counselors will be available remotely to address students' academic needs and students' and staff social, emotional, mental health needs.

Individual students, subject to a written quarantine order, will be provided remote instruction in a manner appropriate to their grade level. The student will have access to any school services deemed necessary and appropriate. The individual student plans will be coordinated by the school principal or designee.

Recess/Outdoor Time

Outdoor play and outdoor learning will be encouraged.

Visitors/Deliveries/Miscellaneous

- SMACS will restrict visits in the school to only those essential to school operations
- Essential meetings will be by appointment or a virtual format.
- All approved visitors must self-screen prior to entry, their temperature may be taken before they are admitted.
- To ensure the safety of students and staff, no outside deliveries for students will be accepted. (i.e. gifts, etc.)
- **No outside food will be brought in.**
- **Parent access will be limited to the main school building and the school business office.**

Health Screening

All staff must self-check for symptoms daily before coming to campus. The self-check for staff includes a daily temperature check and evaluating if they have come into Close Contact as defined below. Any yes answers should be immediately reported to your supervisor before coming on campus.

Parents will be required to check for symptoms daily for their students before coming to campus. The self-check for students includes a daily temperature check and evaluating if they have come into Close Contact as defined below. Any yes answers should be immediately reported to the school office before coming on campus.

COVID-19 Symptoms

1. Have they recently begun experiencing any of the following in a way that is ***not normal for them?***
 - Feeling feverish or a measured temperature greater than or equal to 100.0 degrees Fahrenheit
 - Loss of taste or smell
 - Cough
 - Difficulty breathing
 - Shortness of breath
 - Headache
 - Chills
 - Sore throat
 - Shaking or exaggerated shivering
 - Significant muscle pain or ache
 - Diarrhea

Close Contact

This document refers to “close contact” with an individual who is lab-confirmed to have COVID-19. Close contact is determined by an appropriate public health agency. For clarity, close contact is defined as:

- a. being directly exposed to infectious secretions (e.g., being coughed on while not wearing a mask or face shield); or
- b. being within 6 feet for a cumulative duration of 15 minutes, while not wearing a mask or face shield;

Quarantine if you have been in close contact (within 6 feet of someone for a total of 15 minutes or more) with someone who has COVID-19, unless you have been fully vaccinated.

People who are fully vaccinated do NOT need to quarantine after contact with someone who had COVID-19 unless they have symptoms. Options that can be considered to stop quarantining.

- After day 10 without testing
- After day 7 after receiving a negative test result (test must occur on day 5 or later).

Individuals Confirmed or Suspected with COVID-19

1. Any individuals who **themselves** either: (a) are lab-confirmed to have COVID-19; or (b) experience the symptoms of COVID-19 (listed below) must stay at home throughout the infection period, and cannot return to campus until the school system screens the individual to determine any of the below conditions for campus re-entry have been met:
 - o In the case of an individual who was diagnosed with COVID-19, the individual may return to school when all three of the following criteria are met:
 - i. at least three days (72 hours) have passed since recovery (resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications);
 - ii. the individual has improvement in symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath); and
 - iii. at least ten days have passed since symptoms first appeared.
 - o In the case of an individual who has symptoms that could be COVID-19 and who is not evaluated by a medical professional or tested for COVID-19, such individual is assumed to have COVID-19, and the individual may not return to the campus until the individual has completed the same three-step set of criteria listed above.

If the individual has symptoms that could be COVID-19 and wants to return to school before completing the above stay at home period, the individual must either:

- (a) obtain a medical professional's note clearing the individual for return based on an alternative diagnosis or
- (b) receive two separate confirmations at least 24 hours apart that they are free of COVID via acute infection tests at an approved COVID-19 testing location.