

# **HVA COVID-19 Safety Plan**

*Updated December 17, 2021*



HARLEM VILLAGE ACADEMIES

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## Introduction

Harlem Village Academies (HVA) is deeply committed to the safety and well-being of our students, staff, and the wider school community. We want to create an environment that reduces risk and supports student learning. The New York State Education Department, with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), released a “Health and Safety Guide for the 2021-2022 School Year,” and HVA plans to implement it fully. This document is based on those recommendations, as well as guidance from the New York City Department of Health and the CDC, and it lets families and students know what they should expect when they return to school. The public health guidance upon which this plan is based can and does change frequently, and this plan will be modified as circumstances and public health guidance recommend or require. HVA will adhere to all local, state, and federal requirements relative to schools and auxiliary activities.

Creating a safer school environment means that all staff, teachers, and students have to take several actions, especially:

- Asking students and families to check each student every day before coming to school so that anyone with symptoms of COVID-19 stays home and gets medical care
- Ensuring consistent and correct use of masks
- Social distancing where practicable
- Practicing hand hygiene
- Implementing proper cleaning and disinfection practices

We want to thank all of the staff members who have put in time, effort, and energy into planning for this upcoming school year so we can safely offer full-day, in-person instruction to our students. As we have learned over the past two years, the nature of the pandemic and the official guidance can change quickly and often. While we are releasing these COVID protocols prior to the beginning of the school year, please understand that the information presented is based on the guidance available on the date of publication and is likely to change. The HVA community will be notified of any updates.

Thank you in advance for your patience, understanding, and support. We invite you to read through this safety plan, which was created in an effort to provide additional details of the protocols and procedures for the 2021-2022 school year. We look forward to welcoming all students and staff back in school.

## Vaccination Policy

We are committed to protecting our students from severe harm to their long-term health and keeping our students safe, and we need your help. In addition to masks and other protective measures, **the best way we can protect our students from COVID-19 is by ensuring that everyone age 5 and above is fully vaccinated and everyone else near students is fully vaccinated.**

In response to the explosive increase in the Delta variant, and after careful deliberation and consultation with education leaders and infectious disease experts, HVA has decided it is in the best interest of our children, families, and staff to implement a vaccination requirement for all staff. This requirement is being implemented in an increasing number of schools and organizations throughout New York, including SUNY and many more.

Based on CDC guidelines, **we strongly encourage all of our families and our students age 5 and above to be vaccinated right away.** The Pfizer vaccine is authorized for children ages 5 and above, and requires two doses, three weeks apart. This vaccine fully protects you from the virus two weeks after the second shot. The sooner you and your child receive the first dose, the sooner you are protected. According to the CDC, **Pfizer and all COVID-19 vaccines available in New York are safe and effective. The vaccines are free, readily available across NYC and provided regardless of immigration status.** Getting vaccinated is confidential and easy.

If you would like to learn more about COVID-19 vaccines, we invite you to watch [“Just the Facts: COVID Vaccine Virtual Town Hall”](#) from Harlem Children's Zone.

## Daily Screening for COVID-19 Symptoms

HVA requires a daily at-home screening of each student before they leave for school. This screening, on the following page, has 3 questions about symptoms and exposure to COVID-19.

- **Parents/guardians are expected to conduct this daily screening prior to sending students to school.**
- **It is important that any student that has a fever or other symptom of COVID-19 stays home and DOES NOT COME TO SCHOOL.**
- **If your student is sick, please call the Main Office.**

Staff will conduct daily visual symptom checks as students enter the buildings and upon arrival in the classroom. If students appear sick or complain of feeling unwell, the parent/guardian will be called to pick up the student. (See *Managing Student Sickness at School* on pages 10-12.)

People with COVID-19 have had a wide range of symptoms reported—ranging from mild symptoms to severe illness. Because some of the symptoms of flu and COVID-19 are similar, it may be hard to tell the difference between them based on symptoms alone, and medical advice and testing may be needed. Therefore, students should not come to school if they are sick, even if they do not suspect that they have COVID-19. The CDC provides a [Self-Checker for COVID-19](#) on their website.

To help keep our community safe, we ask that parents and guardians monitor their children for these symptoms closely. We understand that many students with allergies, asthma, and other persistent illnesses may experience some of these symptoms regularly. Parents/guardians should ask their child if they are feeling something new and, if so, they should not come to school and get tested immediately. Even if the test is negative, the student should not return to school until they are feeling better.

Students who are unvaccinated and have been in [close contact](#) with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 or who live in a household with a person who has COVID-19 should not come to school. They should stay home for 10 days after their last close contact with a person who has COVID-19.

# At Home Daily Screening Tool for COVID-19 Symptoms

**1** Have you experienced ANY of the following symptoms in the past 48 hours:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

Please select an answer: ☐ Yes ☐ No

**2** Are you isolating or quarantining because you tested positive for COVID-19 or are worried that you may be sick with COVID-19?

Please select an answer: ☐ Yes ☐ No

**3** Have you been in close physical contact\* in the last 14 days with:

- Anyone who is known to have laboratory-confirmed COVID-19?
- OR
- Anyone who has any symptoms consistent with COVID-19?

Please select an answer: ☐ Yes ☐ No

*\*Close physical contact is defined as being within 6 feet of an infected/symptomatic person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period starting from 48 hours before illness onset (or, for asymptomatic individuals, 48 hours prior to test specimen collection).*

**All answers must be NO before entry to school each day.** If you have had **any** of the above symptoms in the **past 48 hours**, seek medical advice regarding testing and treatment.

8/27/2021 Adapted from: <https://www.cdc.gov/screening/index.html>

## Masking Policy

As part of Harlem Village Academies' efforts to make schools as safe as possible, we are requiring all teachers, staff, and students to wear masks while they are inside the school. Due to the circulating and highly contagious Delta variant, the latest CDC guidance for schools (updated August 5, 2021) recommends that everyone age 2 and older, regardless of vaccination status, wears a mask while indoors. Additionally, Governor Kathy Hochul has directed the New York State Department of Health to institute a universal mask requirement in all schools.

COVID-19 spreads mainly from person to person through respiratory droplets. Masks are a barrier to help prevent respiratory droplets from reaching others and to reduce the chance you will breathe in droplets from others. By wearing a mask, students and staff who may not know they are infected can protect people around them and protect themselves.

Masks must be worn over the nose and mouth, fit close to the face without gaps, and should not have an exhalation valve. (See CDC guidance for correctly wearing and choosing a mask.)

### **We ask that parents/guardians send their child to school with at least two masks.**

The second mask should be used if the first becomes damp.

- Reusable masks should be washed whenever they are dirty, and at least daily.
- The CDC recommends the use of a cloth face mask.
- One-way valve masks may not be worn.
- Schools will have extra masks on hand in the event that a student does not have a covering or if the covering breaks or becomes unusable.

Students will not be expected to wear a mask when they are eating or drinking.

In the case of a student or students relying on lip reading to communicate, the school will provide masks with transparent front panels to teachers or other staff with whom they communicate.

## Do wear a mask that



- Covers your nose and mouth and secure it under your chin.
- Fits snugly against the sides of your face.

## How NOT to wear a mask



Around your neck



On your forehead



Under your nose



Only on your nose



On your chin



Dangling from one ear

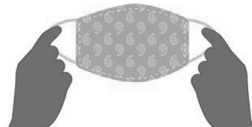


On your arm

## How to take off a mask



Carefully, untie the strings behind your head or stretch the ear loops



Handle only by the ear loops or ties



Fold the outside corners together



Be careful not to touch your eyes, nose, and mouth when removing and wash hands immediately after removing





## **Physical Distancing**

Like mask wearing, physical distancing gives the virus less opportunity to spread. If students and staff are kept apart, droplets/aerosols from their breath are less likely to reach each other. Recent studies from the 2020-2021 school year have found that spread of illness is low if students are 3 feet apart and other prevention measures are in place, such as masking. In alignment with current CDC policy, we aim to maintain a distance of at least 3 feet between students when possible.

## **Shared Supplies**

HVA will take measures to limit the sharing of supplies between students. When supplies must be shared, they will be disinfected daily with CDC approved products.

## **Bathroom Breaks**

HVA bathrooms are set up to support students' hygiene, with handwashing stations and hand sanitizer outside. Students are expected to wear their masks while using the bathroom.

## **Meals**

At lunch, students will only remove their masks to eat when they are physically distanced. In order to support social distancing, some students will take meals outside or spread out in their classrooms, and some will go to the cafeteria. Teachers will also make seating plans for mealtimes.

## **Arrival and Dismissal**

If possible, parents/guardians should travel to school alone to pick up and drop off students. If you travel by car, please stay in your car while waiting for your student. If you do not travel by car, please do your best to physically distance from students and other parents/guardians while entering and exiting school buildings.

## **Seating Plans**

Teachers will make seating plans for their classrooms. It is very important that students stay in their assigned seats. In the event of a student testing positive for COVID-19, the seating plan will allow us to identify the students closest to the positive student. If teachers can be certain that the positive student and those in close contact were correctly wearing masks, the close contacts will not be required to isolate. If not, close contacts will be sent home to isolate for 10 days in accordance with CDC guidance.

## Handwashing and Hand Hygiene

We ask that parents/guardians please speak to their child about proper handwashing and respiratory technique (covering coughs and sneezes). Students will be encouraged to regularly wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Younger children will be supervised to assist in proper handwashing. In addition, we will provide hand sanitizer in every classroom and set up hand sanitizing stations throughout the school.

All students will be routinely reminded that handwashing is important and provided opportunities to wash their hands and/or use hand sanitizer:

- After blowing their nose, coughing or sneezing
- After using the restroom
- Before and after eating or preparing food
- After being outside (e.g., PE or recess)
- After touching frequently touched areas (e.g., shared computers)

## Cleaning and Disinfection

We have ensured we have an adequate stock of CDC approved cleaners and disinfectants. Custodial and maintenance staff will routinely wipe down surfaces and floors in open/empty classrooms throughout the day. Regularly used surfaces will be cleaned and disinfected on a daily basis. In the event that a student tests positive for COVID-19, the area(s) in which they were working will be immediately and thoroughly cleaned and disinfected.

## Testing at School

HVA tested 100% of students from consenting families at the start of school and plans to test 10-20% of the student body once a week. We will choose students from different classes in an attempt to identify cases before they can spread to others. We will only test students whose parents/guardians have given written consent for testing—and for the sake of the safety of all students and staff, we ask that parents give their consent to the testing (which is done by providing saliva samples, not by nose-swabbing).

Students may be asked to participate in testing at school in certain circumstances. Students participating in activities that involve increased possibility of transmitting COVID-19 like singing, band, or strenuous exercise may be asked to test at school before they can participate.

## Managing Student Sickness at School

If a member of staff or a student is showing symptoms of COVID-19 at school, they will immediately be moved to an area of the school to separate them from others. They will be asked if the symptoms are unusual and not the result of allergies, asthma, or some other type of persistent illness. We ask that parents/guardians speak to their child about how to tell the difference between allergies and COVID-19 symptoms.

If the sick person is a student, their parent/guardian will be asked to come to the school to take them home. If possible, the school will assist in arranging a test so that the student can be tested as soon as possible. The area the student had been working in will be immediately and thoroughly cleaned and disinfected.

Parents/guardians should notify the school's Main Office as soon as they receive their student's test results. If the student receives a **negative test result**, no longer has symptoms, and has no known exposure the student may return to school.

If the student receives a **positive test result**, the student and their household will have to isolate for 10 days. The school will notify parents/guardians of any students who were close contacts of the positive student. School leaders will work with local public health officials to determine what additional steps may be required. The student who tested positive for COVID-19 can return to school after 10 days **if they have also been fever free for 24 hours and are not showing any other symptoms.**

## My Child is Showing Signs of COVID-19 at School: What Do I Do?

### Quick Guide for Parents and Guardians

*If your child is sick or shows signs of illness, do not send them to school.*

#### 1. PICK UP YOUR CHILD



- If possible, pick up your child alone.
- If possible, wait in the car for your child.
- Everyone in the car should wear a mask except for children under 2 years old.
- Open the car windows for ventilation.
- If possible, wait 24 hours before cleaning and disinfecting your car, as that allows more time for the amount of virus in the air of your car to die off.
- If unable to pick up your child, work with your school to identify the best way to safely transport your child.
- Arrange to pick up any of your child's medical supplies (if applicable).

#### 2. KEEP YOUR CHILD AT HOME AND MONITOR THEIR SYMPTOMS



- Call your child's healthcare provider to discuss whether your child needs to be evaluated and to determine options for getting tested for COVID-19.
- If possible, have the sick child (and anyone else who has symptoms) keep away from others and use a separate bathroom for 10 days. When not able to keep away from others, a mask should be worn by all members of the household.
- After being in contact with someone with COVID-19, it can take up to 14 days to know if you are sick. All members of the household should stay home and avoid contact with others outside of your home. An exception would be going to your doctor if advised.
- Encourage everyone in the household to wash their hands often and avoid sharing personal household items with others (e.g., dishes, cups, towels, bedding).
- Use an effective household disinfectant to clean "high-touch" surfaces and everyday items such as door handles, countertops, and faucets.

#### 3. IF YOUR CHILD TESTS POSITIVE FOR OR IS SUSPECTED OF HAVING COVID-19

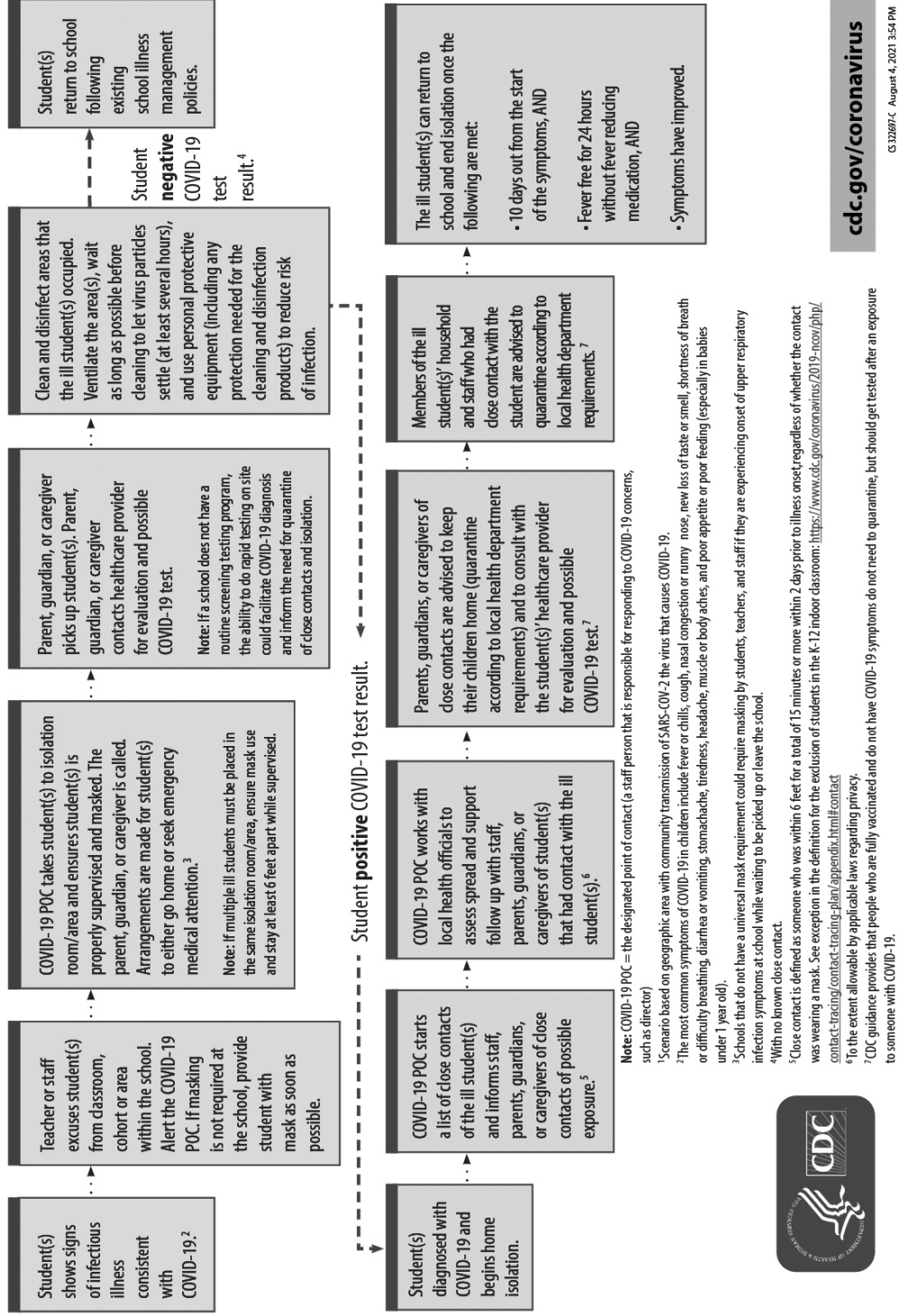


- **If your child tests positive for COVID-19, notify the school.**
- **Your child can return to in-person school only after:**
  - It has been at least 10 days since symptoms started **and**
  - Overall symptoms have improved **and**
  - Your child has had no fever for at least 24 hours (without fever reducing medication).



[cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://cdc.gov/coronavirus)

# WHAT TO DO IF A STUDENT BECOMES SICK OR REPORTS A NEW COVID-19 DIAGNOSIS<sup>1</sup>



**cdc.gov/coronavirus**

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## **Sports and Outdoor Activities**

We recognize that being outdoors and physical activity are important to a student's development and physical and mental well-being. In general, the risk of spreading COVID-19 outdoors is much lower than indoors. Physical distancing will be maintained as much as possible.

However, physical activity almost always leads to increased exhalation, increasing the risk of spreading the disease. In some cases where the risk of spreading COVID-19 is higher (for example, indoor sports), students will have to take part in testing before they are allowed to participate. Students will not be tested unless they have written consent from a parent/guardian.

## **Staff/Student Training on New Policies**

We want to make safety our number one priority. That means everyone at school does everything they can to keep the school and community safe. If we work together, we can create an environment that reduces risk and prioritizes student learning and well-being. All staff will be briefed on the contents of this document and any other relevant policies.

## **Keeping You Informed**

We want to make sure that everyone in the HVA community has the information they need to make the best decisions for their health and safety. Our schools will send notices that keep you informed of positive COVID-19 cases in the school and wider community. We will reach out to you to share any changes to policies and any other details that are relevant to the HVA community.

HVA recognizes that this is a stressful time for children and adults alike. The CDC provides resources for [helping children cope and dealing with stress](#). Our school leaders are here to support HVA families, so please reach out to the school if you have questions or concerns, or need support.

## **Parent/Guardian and Visitor Policy**

We plan to reduce the amount of non-essential visitors to the school. This means that, where possible, parent/guardian meetings will be held remotely. Any visitor that enters the school (including parents/guardians) will be asked to put on a mask.

Please call the school's Main Office if you need to come inside a school building so we can provide instructions.