



## **COVID-19 Health and Safety Plan**

**Fall 2021**

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## I. Background

This COVID-19 Health & Safety Plan is a living document, the intention being to provide the RVWS community with a framework for operations within the ever-evolving pandemic landscape and to allow for revision as new conditions and protocols emerge. This plan was originally drafted in May of 2020, and has been most recently updated July 2021. While omitting sections that are no longer applicable, this version includes much of the original text as well as new guidelines, adopted from the most recent CDC guidelines, to reflect changing circumstances and understandings.

From the outset of the pandemic, River Valley Waldorf School has in many ways been well-positioned to address the challenges posed by COVID-19.

- As a small school, RVWS has been able to more nimbly adapt to changing circumstances than are larger independent or public schools.
- Waldorf pedagogy lends itself naturally to conducting classes outdoors when weather permits.
- Small class sizes allow for adequate social distancing when indoors.
- The Waldorf practice of grouping students in grade-specific classes limits close interaction among children of different ages.
- As a caring community, RVWS families have willingly adhered to the school's protocols in order to ensure the safety of everyone.

Thanks to the clear guidance provided by previous versions of this Plan, combined with strong community adherence to its protocols, RVWS managed to remain minimally affected. As we continue to uphold, monitor, and revise this Health & Safety Plan, the school has designated Pat Janssen, Operations Manager, as the point of contact for all Covid-related communications, questions, and concerns. He can be reached at [pjanssen@rivervalleyschool.org](mailto:pjanssen@rivervalleyschool.org).

## II. Guiding Principles

As River Valley Waldorf School navigates the pandemic landscape in order to carry out its instructional program, we have adopted the following guiding principles.

- The health and safety of our students, and by extension the health and safety of all River Valley families, is our highest priority.
- At the same time, we hold that in-person, on-site instruction is also a high priority and should be provided for our students as much as possible during this time, and recognize that this involves some degree of risk for exposure and transmission of the virus.
- River Valley will follow the dictates and guidelines set forth by the CDC, the State of Pennsylvania, and the Bucks County Health Department in establishing its Covid-related protocols as a baseline, drawing as well on the experience and example of other public and independent schools.
- This Health & Safety Plan will be reviewed regularly and revised accordingly given changing conditions and understandings. Revisions will be communicated with the entire community as they are adopted.

## **Key Takeaway Strategies to Reduce Transmission from the CDC**

- Students benefit from in-person learning, and safely returning to in-person instruction in the fall of 2021 is a priority.
- Vaccination is the leading public health prevention strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic. Promoting vaccination can help schools safely return to in-person learning as well as extracurricular activities and sports.
- Due to the circulating and highly contagious Delta variant, CDC recommends universal indoor masking by all students (age 2 and older), staff, teachers, and visitors to K-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status.
- In addition to universal indoor masking, CDC recommends schools maintain at least 3 feet of physical distance between students within classrooms to reduce transmission risk.
- Screening, ventilation, handwashing and respiratory etiquette, staying home when sick and getting tested, contact tracing in combination with quarantine and isolation, and cleaning and disinfection are also important layers of prevention to keep schools safe.
- Students, teachers, and staff should stay home when they have signs of any infectious illness and be referred to their healthcare provider for testing and care.
- Many schools serve children under the age of 12 who are not eligible for vaccination at this time. Therefore, this guidance emphasizes implementing layered prevention strategies (e.g., using multiple prevention strategies together consistently) to protect students, teachers, staff, visitors, and other members of their households and support in-person learning.
- Localities should monitor community transmission, vaccination coverage, screening testing, and occurrence of outbreaks to guide decisions on the level of layered prevention strategies (e.g., physical distancing, screening testing).

### **A. Universal and Correct Use of Masks**

#### **Substantial or high transmission community transmission**

- During *substantial or high transmission*, all persons including visitors, regardless of vaccination status, will wear well-fitting face masks indoors when physical distance (3-6 feet of physical separation) cannot be maintained and outdoors when physical distancing cannot be maintained.
- Masks may be removed during snack, lunch, and rest periods while maintaining physical distancing.
- Teachers may permit periodic, indoor “mask breaks” when students are seated or standing at a distance of 3 to 6 feet or more from others and other health and safety practices are in place: spaces are well ventilated with open windows, frequent handwashing, and limited shared surfaces.
- Mask use will be required on buses to and from school for all students.
- Students, faculty, staff, and visitors will not be required to wear masks outdoors on school grounds when physical distance of 3 feet can be maintained.

## **Low to moderate community transmission**

- During *low to moderate* community transmission, it is expected that all students and unvaccinated teachers and staff will wear well-fitting face masks indoors when physical distance (3 to 6 feet of physical separation) cannot be maintained.
  - Vaccinated teachers and staff may choose not to wear masks when it supports pedagogy, and physical distancing can be maintained.
  - Unvaccinated visitors to the school are required to wear masks at all times indoors, and should maintain physical distance from others. During *low to moderate* community transmission, vaccinated visitors may choose not to wear masks when physical distancing can be maintained.

\* The requirement for mask wearing for vaccinated people is directly related to transmission rates. The CDC recommends universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors to K-12 schools regardless of vaccination status in areas of *substantial or high community transmission*.

In general, people do not need to wear masks outdoors when a distance of 3 feet can be maintained. However, particularly in areas of substantial to high community transmission, the CDC recommends that people who are not fully vaccinated wear a mask in crowded outdoor settings or during activities that involve sustained close contact with other people who are not fully vaccinated. It is also noted that when children are playing outdoors, and participating in games like tag it may not be reasonable for children to hold physical distancing in their consciousness and therefore masks may be necessary.

State guidelines permit an exemption for students with a disability or medical conditions that contraindicate the use of masks. River Valley requires a note from a parent or guardian for any such exemption.

## **B. Physical Distancing**

- The CDC in April 2021 changed its recommended distance between students in schools from 6 feet to 3 feet. Because our space allows it, maintaining a 6 foot distance between individuals as much as possible will remain the school's practice.
- According to CDC guidelines, a distance of 6 feet should be maintained during activities when masks cannot be worn, such as eating. A 6 foot distance should also be maintained during activities when increased exhalation occurs, such as singing, shouting, and exercise. These activities should only be conducted outdoors or in a large, well-ventilated space.
- Students should maintain a distance of 3 to 6 feet while riding buses when possible.
- Whenever possible, seating in classrooms is spaced at 3 to 6 feet apart and desks should face in one direction in the classroom rather than towards one another. Each classroom is fitted with visual marks on the floor to show where desks can be placed, and where the teacher can instruct the class from a 3 to 6 foot distance.
- Where appropriate, a physical barrier such as a partition may be used where maintaining 3 to 6 feet of distance is difficult (such as at the reception desk).

- The kitchen service line is equipped with a sneeze guard to protect food. Food service protocols are in place to keep all food behind the sneeze guard during lunch service.
- In-person gatherings that involve any crossover between individual class “pods” or the presence of parents or others outside the school’s daily operations will be carried out outdoors as much as possible. If a crossover event occurs indoors, increased ventilation, physical distancing, and mask wearing will be implemented.
- Meetings among adults within the immediate or extended school community will be carried out outdoors, indoors with appropriate ventilation and distancing, or virtually - as the number of participants dictates.
- Visitors within the school may continue to be limited. Unvaccinated visitors to the school are required to wear masks at all times indoors, and should maintain physical distance from others. \*Vaccinated visitors may choose not to wear masks.

\* The requirement for mask wearing for vaccinated people is directly related to transmission rates. The CDC recommends universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors to K-12 schools regardless of vaccination status in areas of *substantial or high community transmission*.

## **Handwashing and Respiratory Etiquette**

Through ongoing lessons and reminders, students are taught proper handwashing techniques.

- Students and employees must wash hands frequently and for a duration of at least 20 seconds throughout the school day.
- With the exception of two classrooms (learning support and a breakout classroom) every classroom at RVWS is equipped with its own sink, allowing for frequent handwashing.
- Teachers will emphasize handwashing for all students, in an age-appropriate way, that encourages confidence and care for the community rather than worry or fretting.
- Hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol will be available for teachers and students when outside or where sinks are not readily accessible.
- Children will be encouraged to cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue when not wearing a mask, to discard tissues immediately, and to immediately wash their hands after blowing their nose, coughing, or sneezing.

## **C. Cleaning and Maintaining Healthy Facilities/Materials**

- The school’s heating system was upgraded in 2019 to include increased circulation of fresh air to all classrooms. The ventilation system in classrooms performs six complete fresh air changes per hour.
- All classrooms have operable windows, and teachers are encouraged to keep windows and doors open as much as possible to increase the circulation of fresh air in classrooms and hallways. Even just cracking windows open a few inches improves air circulation.

- Air quality indoors is maintained through the use of air purifiers with medical grade, H13 HEPA filters and are in all rooms including Early Childhood spaces where children will be napping and resting. Air purifiers should be placed in the center of the room and should run continuously when classes are in session.
- The school’s cleaning staff will clean and disinfect bathrooms, common areas, and hallways daily. Individual classrooms will be cleaned and disinfected by school cleaning staff weekly, on a rotation. School staff will disinfect the bathrooms and “high touch” common areas at least once during school hours in addition to the daily cleaning. Teachers and students will clean and disinfect their own personal spaces (desks, seating, and personal items at desks) daily.
- Students will continue to utilize personal school supplies. Teachers will continue to make efforts to avoid shared materials and surfaces. Items that must be shared will be disinfected between uses.
- The school’s water system is monitored and tested professionally on a weekly basis. The system is flushed regularly during testing and sample collection. Students will be encouraged to use the water bottle filling station and will not use the drinking fountain.
- The hot lunch program operates a licensed commercial kitchen under the Bucks County Board of Health and carries a ServeSafe certification. Gloves and masks are used during food preparation. The school’s lunch service currently meets CDC guidelines for students to bring their own lunches, or to eat lunch in classrooms. Plates and cutlery used for lunch service are hand washed in hot soapy water, then disinfected using a commercial dishwasher.

**D. Contact Tracing, Isolation, and Quarantine**

- Parents/caregivers are expected to monitor their children’s health closely, taking temperatures each morning before sending their children to school, and keeping children home who are exhibiting any symptoms associated with COVID-19. River Valley will follow current CDC guidelines and will collaborate with the Bucks County Health Department, to the extent allowable by privacy laws, to confidentially provide information about people diagnosed with or exposed to COVID-19.
- At present these are the protocols that River Valley has adopted in the event of possible COVID-19 infection.

<b>If...</b>	<b>Then...</b>
A student develops flu-like symptoms overnight at home.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Student stays home from school.</li> <li>● Family consults with their health care provider for evaluation and determination if COVID-19 testing is recommended.</li> </ul>
A student shows symptoms of COVID-19 at school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Teacher removes student from classroom and notifies administration.</li> <li>● Administration team member takes student to infirmary until transportation</li> </ul>

	<p>can be arranged to send student home or seek emergency medical attention.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent(s), guardian(s) or caregiver(s) of ill student notified to pick up student.</li> <li>• Family consults with their health care provider for evaluation and determination if testing is recommended.</li> <li>• Exposed areas are cleaned and disinfected.</li> </ul>
<p>A student shows symptoms of COVID-19 and receives a negative COVID-19 test result.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student returns to school when fever free for at least 24 hours with no fever-reducing medication and once symptoms have improved.</li> </ul>
<p>Parents report that their child has tested positive for COVID-19.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers report to Pat Janssen, Director of Operations, unless the family has already done so.</li> <li>• Pat will follow up with family to learn what has been recommended by their healthcare professionals and their local Department of Health.</li> <li>• With adherence to the most recent CDC guidance, there are few scenarios that would warrant the quarantining of an entire class. If exposure to classmates has happened as defined as: an unvaccinated student(s) was/were closer than 3 feet for a cumulative period of 15 minutes or longer to a COVID positive student/adult and mask wearing procedures were not followed, Pat will issue the letter from Bucks County Health Department announcing that those students would enter a period of quarantine. Families will also be urged to consult with their family doctors. If the majority of the class was exposed to a COVID positive person, meaning the majority of the class was unvaccinated and was closer than 3 feet for a cumulative period of 15 minutes or longer to the COVID positive person and mask wearing procedures were not followed, then class quarantining procedures would be utilized.</li> <li>• RVWS will collaborate with Bucks County Health Department on any additional and necessary contact tracing.</li> <li>• Following recommended health department protocols, all potentially</li> </ul>

	<p>affected classrooms will be disinfected before once again receiving students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● If it were necessary to quarantine the majority of a class, the HOS and PLG would make arrangements for remote instruction during the quarantine period for the entire class, and plans would be communicated to affected families.</li> <li>● A communication will be issued to the entire school community informing parents of the COVID-19 diagnosis and the steps that are being taken.</li> <li>● According to the Bucks County Health Department, students must quarantine for 10 days from the established date of exposure, unless they are asymptomatic for 7 days and test negative on Day 5 or later after exposure (thus returning on Day 8).</li> <li>● If split instruction is necessary - some remote and some in-person - the teacher, with support of the PLG and HOS, will determine how to proceed. Communication with families will follow.</li> <li>● Fully vaccinated people who have a known exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 to be tested 3-5 days after exposure, regardless of whether they have symptoms, and should wear a mask in public indoor settings without exception for 14 days or until they receive a negative test.</li> <li>● Regardless of vaccination status, any person with new or unexplained symptoms of COVID-19 still needs to be isolated and evaluated for COVID-19 testing.</li> </ul>
<p>Parents report that a family member of an RV student has tested positive for COVID-19.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● All positive COVID-19 test results are sent to the local health department of the family's residence.</li> <li>● The RVWS student should follow the directive of the student's local county health department.</li> <li>● The health department will determine based on exposure and case investigation information gathered as to how long the student should be kept out of school under quarantine.</li> </ul>



<p>Parents report that an RVWS student has been exposed (or may have been exposed) to COVID-19 outside of school.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Parents are urged to consult with their healthcare provider to determine next steps.</li> <li>● If testing is recommended, the student should remain at home until results are in.</li> </ul>
<p>Parents report that a family member of an RVWS student has been exposed (or may have been exposed) to COVID-19.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Parents are urged to consult with their healthcare provider to determine next steps.</li> <li>● If testing is recommended, the student should remain at home until results are in.</li> </ul>
<p>A student asks about a classmate who has been absent for several days.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The teacher will use discretion in responding, being mindful not to violate FERPA regulations (i.e. do not disclose personally identifiable information).</li> </ul>
<p>A student reports to the class that a peer has COVID-19, or is in quarantine because a s/he or a family member has been exposed to or diagnosed with COVID-19.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The teacher will use discretion in responding, being mindful not to violate FERPA regulations (i.e. do not disclose personally identifiable information).</li> </ul>
<p>An unvaccinated student or adult returns from domestic or international travel.</p> <p>CDC recommends delaying travel until you are fully vaccinated, because travel increases your chance of getting and spreading COVID-19.</p>	<p>For children and adults who are unvaccinated after you travel:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Get tested with a viral test 3-5 days after travel AND stay home and self-quarantine for a full 7 days after travel.</li> <li>○ Even if you test negative, stay home and self-quarantine for the full 7 days.</li> <li>○ If your test is positive, isolate yourself to protect others from getting infected.</li> <li>○ If you don't get tested, stay home and self-quarantine for 10 days after travel.</li> <li>○ Self-monitor for COVID-19 symptoms; isolate and get tested if you develop symptoms.</li> </ul>
<p>A vaccinated student or adult returns from domestic or international travel.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● During travel: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Wearing a mask over your nose and mouth and physically distance when possible.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● After travel:</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Self-monitor for COVID-19 symptoms; isolate and get tested if you develop symptoms.</li> <li>○ Follow all state and local recommendations or requirements.</li> <li>○ You do NOT need to get tested or self-quarantine if you are fully vaccinated or have recovered from COVID-19 in the past 3 months. You should still follow all other travel recommendations.</li> </ul>
A teacher tests positive for COVID-19.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The same protocol will be carried out as if a student in the class has tested positive.</li> <li>● Substitute coverage for remote instruction will be arranged for the teacher as necessary.</li> </ul>
The family member of a teacher tests positive for COVID-19.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The same protocol will be carried out as if a family member of a student in the class has tested positive.</li> </ul>

- The definition of a close contact is an individual who was within 3 to 6 feet of a person diagnosed with COVID-19 for a total of 15 minutes cumulatively or continuously or more in a 24 hour period AND the exposed individual is unvaccinated AND mask wearing protocols were not followed. According to the CDC, the close contact definition excludes vaccinated individuals and students who were within 3 to 6 feet of an infected student when both individuals were engaged in consistent and correct use of well-fitting face masks and other school prevention strategies (e.g. increased ventilation, correct mask use, and physical distancing) are in place.
- Quarantine should be used for unvaccinated students, teachers, and staff who might have been exposed to COVID-19, and it is determined that masking and/or physical distancing protocols were compromised. Close contacts, identified through contact tracing, should quarantine unless they are fully vaccinated, or have tested positive in the last 3 months, and do not have symptoms and it is determined that masking and/or physical distancing protocols were compromised.

## **IV: Additional Notes**

### **A. Care of the Community**

- CDC guidelines suggest leave time should be flexible and not penalize people for taking time off, and should allow sick employees to stay home and away from fellow co-workers. Leave policies should also account for employees who need to stay home with children or to care for sick family members. RVWS's leave policy will adhere to these recommendations.
- Teachers will facilitate age-appropriate conversations within their classrooms to encourage students to voice concerns. It is our hope that putting into place social distancing protocols for in-person learning along with opportunities for the children to speak their minds and to raise questions, will enable us all to feel, once again, the life-affirming strength of our RVWS community.

### **B. Ongoing Review of the Plan**

- Staff will be trained on and will periodically review all elements of this Health & Safety Plan and are encouraged to reach out to Pat with any questions or concerns.
- Despite the fact that field trips and all-school gatherings pose more health risks to the community than eliminating these events altogether, it is acknowledged that the carrying out of certain capstone events and celebrations is foundational to the RVWS experience. The school's administration is charged with the review of proposed events and the implementation of procedures that will ensure maximum safety for all concerned. Anyone wishing to schedule an event on campus that does not adhere strictly to the guidelines listed within this plan should issue a request in writing, with proposed safety protocols included, to Pat at [pjanssen@rivervalley.org](mailto:pjanssen@rivervalley.org).
- This plan will be reviewed monthly by the school's administration, and will be updated in light of evolving guidance from the CDC, the State of Pennsylvania, and the Bucks County Health Department.

### **C. Resources and References**

- [CDC Operational Strategy for K-12 Schools](#)
- [Pennsylvania Public Health Guidance for School Communities](#)
- [Pennsylvania Guidelines for Determining the Instructional Model](#)
- [Mask Do's and Don'ts for Children K-5](#)