



THE DIOCESE OF COLUMBUS

Update to Diocese of Columbus Office of Catholic Schools Re-Opening Plan November 11, 2020

As the global coronavirus pandemic enters into its eighth month, a new Task Force has been reviewing the guidelines and practices that were put in place in July to guide the re-opening of the Catholic schools of the Diocese of Columbus. The Task Force believes that the guidance from that original plan has served the schools well and has been a key factor in maintaining operations at a Tier 1 or Tier 2 level through the first quarter of the school year. It is a prudent exercise to periodically re-evaluate our plan against the ever-changing course of Covid-19.

The Diocese of Columbus remains firm in its commitment to continue school operations to the fullest extent permitted by the health and safety regulations as established by CDC guidelines and the State of Ohio, including the Ohio Department of Education and the Ohio Department of Health. While the schools of the Diocese must be prepared to engage Tier 3 planning at any time, there are no plans to impose a Tier 3 response across all schools.

Key Considerations for Moving Schools to Tier 3 Response

Schools are discouraged from connecting their Tier response directly to any one external factor. Instead, the decision must be made through the consideration of several factors. The following list comprises the decision-making framework that schools should consider in consultation with the superintendent and pastors of the elementary schools:

- Local health indicators
 - o Cases per 100,000 people in the last 2 weeks in a school's location
 - o Hospital bed availability and status
 - o Rates of infection and positive testing for specific age groups in school's location
 - o Local conditions or local spread
- Consultation with local healthcare professionals
- Student and staff absence rates and causes
- Percentage of the students or staff under quarantine orders and the impact of operations
- Ability to maintain high sanitization standards and adequate supplies of essential products
- State of Ohio county warning levels (Yellow, Orange, Red, Purple) for school's location
- Local health department recommendations

The duration of a move to Tier 3 will be determined locally based on the above criteria. Efforts will be made to coordinate responses among all of the Catholic schools within a county. However, because the Diocese encompasses 53 schools spread over 15 counties in Central and Southern Ohio with varying enrollments and building capacities, it is possible that individual schools might operate under different Tiers at different times of the school year.

The schools of the Diocese of Columbus have done an admirable job in providing an outstanding Catholic education to our students in a safe environment this year. In order to continue to do so, we must maintain vigilance and reinforce the key safety measures of masking, distancing, handwashing, and sanitization as well as excellent communication.