



Covid Handbook — Protocols and Guidelines 2021-2022

Introduction

This Covid Handbook contains Schechter's updated plans for operating during the pandemic during the 2021-2022 school year. It represents a major revision of the 2020-2021 Safe Reopening Handbook, incorporating all that doctors and public health officials have learned to this date, as well as the current guidelines of the Connecticut Department of Health.

These plans incorporate all of the techniques and best practices that can prevent the coronavirus from spreading in our community, while also supporting our students' academic growth and social-emotional well-being. It aims for physical distancing and social connecting; it will allow our students to learn, collaborate, and build relationships with each other and their teachers.

Our plans and decisions were developed by the school's Pandemic Response Team, which this year will consist of Rabbi Berger, the Head of School; Dr. Riva Lewinter, physician and board member; Brenda Masterson, school nurse; and Sarah Montag, Director of Teaching and Learning. Dr. Lewinter consulted other physicians for additional expertise and advice; we are especially grateful to Dr. Jennifer Madan Cohen, whose contributions can be found on every page. Resources consulted included guidelines from the CDC, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and school-focused guidance from the Connecticut Association of Independent Schools; mandates and rulings from the Connecticut Department of Health; webinars with physicians from Hartford HealthCare, the Yale School of Medicine, and more.

This is a living, dynamic document. As we learn more, or as conditions change, we will revise it, and alert you to any changes. Should you have any questions or need any additional information in regard to this Handbook, please contact our office:

Phone: (860) 561-0700

Email: jberger@ssds-hartford.org

With gratitude,

Rabbi Jonathan Berger
Head of School

I. Guiding Principles

- A. Overall Goal:** Our goal is to create a safe learning environment that incorporates all of the precautions that can prevent Covid from spreading in our community, while also supporting our students' academic growth and social-emotional well-being. We want to minimize the risk of COVID-19 transmission within our school, and keep our Schechter community safe and healthy.
- B. Adaptability :** Flexibility and change are to be expected. As doctors and public health authorities learn more, our protocols and guidelines will adapt.
- C. Teaching Healthy practices:** Ongoing education and reminders regarding distancing and correct mask use will reinforce healthy practices.

II. Ongoing protective measures

- A. Vaccination:** All adult staff, parents, visitors and volunteers who enter the building during school hours must be fully vaccinated.

B. Daily assessment

1. It requires all of us, parents and school professionals, to keep our community safe. **Parents are responsible primarily for making sure that sick children stay home.** At drop-off, staff will greet students, ask how they are feeling, and welcome them into the building.
2. No one—students, teachers, staff, other adults—should enter the building if they have experienced any of the following symptoms for all or most of the previous day:
 - a) Fever greater than 100°F/37.8°C
 - b) Loss of the sense of taste or smell
 - c) Cough, shortness of breath, sore throat or difficulty speaking
 - d) Diarrhea

If your child has any of these symptoms for all or most of the previous day, please notify our school nurse, keep them home, and consult with your pediatrician.

3. No one should enter the building if they are awaiting results for a COVID-19 test that was taken because of symptoms.

C. Masks

1. All students aged 2 and up will wear masks indoors, except when eating or drinking. Early Childhood students will also remove masks during nap time, in compliance with state guidelines, but are spaced at least 6 feet apart when they nap.

2. All staff will wear masks indoors when others are present. Teachers and staff working alone in a workspace, with no students or other staff present, may remove their masks.
3. Masks must cover the wearer's mouth and nose, and must be well-fitting so that they stay in place while talking, laughing, etc. If there are questions regarding acceptable masks, please direct them to the Schechter Nurse. Masks with vents and gaiters are not acceptable.
4. Students should have at least five masks in school, and masks should be laundered regularly. Masks should be labeled with the student's name.

D. Distancing

1. Early Childhood students will not be expected to physically distance.
2. Students in K-8 will generally maintain at least 3 ft. of distance from others when indoors. Classroom set-ups, including placement of tables and/or markers on the floor, will be used to help students space themselves appropriately.

E. Ventilation and facilities

1. Our HVAC system has been tuned to optimize improved circulation, filtration, and fresh (outside) air intake.
2. Each classroom will again have a HEPA-level air cleaner
3. Water fountains will not be used. Students should bring reusable water bottles, labeled with his/her name, which can be refilled at classroom sinks.

F. Cohorting

1. Each classroom will generally function as a self-contained cohort ("pod").
2. Different cohorts may occasionally be in large indoor rooms (such as the cafeteria, Beit Tefillah and Gymnasium); in those cases, the cohorts will be spaced apart.
3. RELISH (our spirited all-school pre-Shabbat program) will be held outside during the fall, and will only take place indoors when the Pandemic Response Committee determines that the risk is relatively low because local conditions have significantly improved

G. Handwashing

1. While it is now understood that Covid is not generally transmitted through contact or surfaces, we still wish to minimize the spread of other germs. Students will wash or sanitize their hands when entering school in the morning, and before lunch, and after recess.

III. Daily routines

A. Lunch:

Early Childhood: Classes will eat and have snacks in their own rooms.

K-8: Two classes/cohorts will eat in the cafeteria at a time, at opposite ends of the room. At the lunch tables, students will be distanced from each other in a staggered pattern (note: they will be further from one another in the cafeteria than they would in classrooms).

B. Recess: students are not required to wear masks outside, including recess.

IV. Parent meetings and events

A. At the start of the 2021-2022 School Year, entrance to the school by parents and other adult visitors who are not Schechter employees will be extremely limited; in those rare cases that take place during school hours (i.e. when children are present in the building), the volunteers and visitors must be fully vaccinated.

B. When conditions permit, the school hopes to welcome parents and visitors back to the school building as part of various programs and structured activities. Whenever such visits take place during school hours (i.e. when children are present in the building), the parents and visitors must be fully vaccinated.

V. Illness and Exposure to COVID

A. A student, staff or faculty member who becomes ill during the school day will wait in a room by themselves, near the nurse's office, until they can be safely transported home. Parents must pick up ill children promptly. In the event of an emergency, school personnel will use their judgment to arrange appropriate transportation. The Schechter nurse, in consultation with the Department of Public Health and in accordance with their most current guidelines, will assess the situation and determine whether siblings or family members should be dismissed from school at the same time.

B. The student, staff or faculty member will only return to school after having been cleared by the school nurse, in consultation with the Department of Public Health (and, in most cases, with the guidance of the Pandemic Response Team).

C. **Our community's health and safety depends on prompt and full reporting of any COVID-related situations** in your households. Please contact Brenda Masterson, our school nurse, via phone (860-561-0700) or email (nurse@ssds-hartford.org), to report any of the following situations. This is the case regardless of vaccination status or past diagnosis.

1. If a member of your household (or pod, if your family has one) is diagnosed with COVID-19, whether it is a Schechter student, sibling, or parent
2. If a member of your household (or pod) has close contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19

D. In accordance with state and local laws, the school will notify health officials, staff, and families of cases of COVID-19, and advise those who had or have

close contact with a person with COVID-19 to stay home, self-monitor for symptoms and follow CDC guidance if symptoms develop. This will be done while maintaining confidentiality in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (“ADA”).