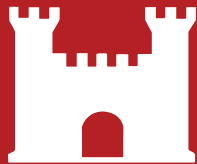




RETURN TO SCHOOL PLAN

July 20, 2020



INTRODUCTION

The coronavirus pandemic has provided challenges to schools and families around the world. This spring at New City School, teachers, staff, students, and families demonstrated extraordinary resilience in adapting to new and challenging conditions. As we continue to prepare for next school year, please know that New City is committed to opening school for our children as long as it is safe to do so. We know that the essential work of children is learning and playing in a school environment that provides opportunities for academic and social development, and we are working diligently to open school in the safest manner possible.

OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The guiding principles below have helped us make decisions and devise our plans for next year. The principles are aligned with our mission and our Four Pillars: academic excellence, development of the personal intelligences, diversity beyond the numbers, and joyful learning.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

The health and safety of our community is our highest priority. During this pandemic, we have a responsibility for the health and safety not only of the New City School community, but for the broader community as well. The City of St. Louis Department of Health has issued regulations and guidelines for the safe operation of schools, and we will follow their instruction, as well as guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), our New City School Medical Advisory Team, and several other organizations.

IN-PERSON INSTRUCTION

We know that the best learning environment for children is one in which they are in school and in our building, surrounded by their teachers and peers, and taking advantage of our comprehensive and diverse educational program. We only expect to close school again if an order from City or State authorities compels us to do so, or if an unsafe condition exists in our region. To the greatest extent possible and in conjunction with official health guidelines, we will strive to provide as much in-person instruction as possible for our students.

FLEXIBILITY AND ADAPTABILITY

At the heart of our work this year will be ensuring that our academic program continues to unfold while we simultaneously respond to the health conditions in our community, region, and country. The rigorous planning that the faculty have conducted this summer will allow us to deliver a strong academic program in-person or remotely but we also have to understand how quickly schools and the country have had to adjust to respond to changing conditions over the past few months. We anticipate this continuing to be a period of rapid change and our planning allows us to be as agile and nimble as possible.

OUR APPROACH

Given the advantages of our enrollment size and spacious indoor and outdoor facilities, we know that it is possible to have school five days per week in the building with social distancing practices in place. Our dedicated and innovative faculty and staff have devoted their summers to preparing for the new school year, and we can't wait to welcome children into school once again on August 20th.

At the same time, we also recognize the importance of creating a school environment that addresses the health and safety concerns of our students, families, faculty, and staff. This Return to School Plan lays out our vision for a safe return to school and the steps we will take to mitigate the risk of respiratory illness (including COVID-19) for the upcoming school year. This plan also reflects what we know as of July 20th, 2020. If we have seen anything over this summer, it is a shifting landscape that changes almost daily with regard to this global pandemic. As conditions continue to change between now and the start of the year and beyond, this plan may need to be amended or revised.

This plan is the product of work from members throughout the New City School community. First and foremost are our amazing faculty and the administrative team. A small group of Trustees has also been meeting to discuss and review new procedures and policies. While we have no shortage of doctors in our parent body, four specific parents, including three infectious disease epidemiologists and one pediatrician, have been providing advice and counsel to the school since early March, and will continue to serve in an advisory role as we make health and safety decisions for the NCS community.

There are also directives we must observe from the St. Louis City Department of Health, which has outlined regulations and guidelines, many based on procedures from the CDC, for the safe reopening of schools in St. Louis City. There have also been many other sources of guidance and support, which are detailed at the end of this plan.

We understand that this transition back to school may come with concerns and complexities, and we are committed to reorienting your children to the new school year in the safest and most supportive way possible. We are also acutely aware that conditions have changed quickly with this pandemic – while we want to be back in school and believe we can do it safely, we know that changing conditions may mean that City or State authorities may compel schools to close. If that is the case, we will quickly transition to our remote learning program. The remote learning plan will be disseminated along with the back-to-school mailing, and it will detail the improvements we have made since the spring.

IMPORTANT DATES TO KNOW:

July 20th	Initial Return to School plan shared
August 7th	Back-to-school mailing sent home, including an up-to-date Return to School plan <i>(Additional start of school information will be shared in this electronic mailing, along with student/ teacher groupings)</i>
August 20th	First day of school for all students

A CULTURE OF SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

Ultimately, responding to COVID-19 means that we all need to adapt a culture of shared responsibility. New City School will ask all families and employees to abide by a set of practices to help limit the spread of COVID-19. Those practices will be defined in a back-to-school agreement that we will ask all families and employees to sign. (A preview copy is included at the end of this Plan.) The agreement is not meant to be prescriptive but to help ensure that our entire community is doing what it can to try and prevent COVID-19 from entering our school community. We will be asking you to keep your children home when they are sick, as well as asking employees to stay home when sick. These are bedrock principles to helping keep our community healthy. While New City cannot monitor everyone's activities outside of school, we can ask for everyone's cooperation and support with actions that impact the full community. Every adult in our community needs to take responsibility for their health and for the health of their family in the interest of keeping the New City community safe.

INVESTING IN OUR HEALTH AND SAFETY

Working to ensure our health and safety in order to provide safe, in-person instruction for our children are important goals. In order to meet these goals, New City School has made significant financial investments in a number of areas, including:

- Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) for all employees
- Hand sanitizer and dispensers for all areas of the school
- Touchless water fountains/water filling stations throughout the school

- Amplified cleaning practices and materials
- Ionization air purification system for our air handling units in order to help cleanse the air
- Dozens of no touch infra-red thermometers
- Furniture additions to classrooms to facilitate social distancing, including plexiglass dividers for desks and tables
- Additional classroom materials so as to minimize sharing
- Additional staffing to help with supervision needs as a result of social distancing practices

The additional expenses involved with getting ready for the coming year and promoting the health and safety of the community are significant, but they are essential costs to bear as we strive to safely provide as much in-person instruction as possible.

HEALTH AND SAFETY MEASURES

The following is a list of safety measures that we will have in place next year, based upon regulations and guidelines from the St. Louis City Department of Health, the CDC, our New City Medical Advisory Team, and the other organizations and publications cited at the end of this document.

FACE COVERINGS

The evidence is clear on the importance of face coverings in mitigating the spread of COVID-19. **All children and all employees will wear face coverings throughout the school day.** (An earlier email announced 4th Grade and above – we have since amended this requirement to include all students.) Multiple breaks from face coverings will be built into the day for all and will happen in a safe environment, namely while children are within their cohort, able to be appropriately distanced and/or outside. Face coverings will be available for any student that does not bring one to school. We know that it is sometimes hard to recognize a person or to read facial cues while that person has their face covered – all employees will also wear a picture of their smiling face to assist children in recognizing us. We also recognize that for our youngest students, using a face covering is not always possible and that wearing a face covering requires practice and stamina – we will be patient and understanding, particularly with our youngest children.

COHORTS AND DECREASED MIXING OF STUDENTS

Students will be grouped by homerooms (3/4s through 4th Grade) or their advisories (5th and 6th Grades). Schedules and classroom use will be designed to keep students in consistent groups throughout the day. For example, we have three sections of 1st Grade this fall: those three sections will be scheduled in such a way as they will not mix with each other or with other groups of children in the building. Students will receive most, if not all, of their instruction in their homeroom or outdoors. We will maintain some community spaces (large indoor spaces such as the theater, gym, and library) where we may occasionally have an entire grade together for a meeting. We will also maintain some spaces as flexible spaces (classrooms outside of homerooms such as the science lab) where students might occasionally go for instruction. Community and flexible spaces will be sanitized between use by different cohorts of students.

All students will eat lunch with their specific cohorts in their rooms or outside, but not mixed together in the cafeteria. Schedules will be devised to allow specialist teachers to travel to a limited number of students, rather than students traveling to the specialist teacher. **These practices are designed to reduce the risk of viral transmission and to allow for discrete cohorts to quarantine in the event of infection without requiring that the entire school close and transition to distance learning.** This strategy is crucial to our desire to maintain in-person instruction and to avoid closing the entire school in the event of a positive COVID-19 case.

SOCIAL AND PHYSICAL DISTANCING

Social distancing, along with masks, are the best ways to reduce droplet transmission between people. With the age of our elementary students, we recognize that strictly adhering to a six (6) foot distance between children will be impossible to do at all times, specifically within a classroom. This fact is also recognized by the City of St. Louis Health Department and the St. Louis County Public Health Department. Classrooms for students in 3rd Grade and above will be equipped with new desks that will facilitate distancing of a minimum of three (3) feet and will face forward when feasible. Classrooms for students in 1st through 2nd Grades will be equipped with tables for children to use that will facilitate distancing of a minimum of three (3) feet. Plexiglass dividers will also be utilized in these situations, allowing for additional protection. In Kindergarten classrooms and younger, children will move more freely between the rug area, the risers, and tables. Plexiglass dividers will also be utilized when appropriate, as will floor markers which will serve as visible distancing reminders to all students throughout the school and the classrooms for our youngest children.

Preventing interactions between cohorts will be prioritized over the distancing of students within a cohort, although distancing precautions will be taken within each cohort. At the same time, the importance of the specific cohorts of children and their lack of mixing with other cohorts is crucially important, as is the wearing of masks, the daily health screenings, being outside as much as possible, and maintaining a rigorous routine of handwashing throughout the day.

Movement on campus will be controlled and directed to reduce the mixing of students. Procedures will be in place to ensure distancing when children are traveling through the hallways, such as one-way hallway traffic patterns and visual reminders. Numbers of children at any one time in the bathroom will be limited.

HAND HYGIENE

Students and employees will follow a regular schedule of handwashing and/or use of hand sanitizer throughout the day. Hand sanitizer dispensers will be available in every classroom and adjacent to every building entrance to ensure regular access. Instruction on handwashing and hygiene will be provided to all children and employees at the start of school.

ENHANCED CLEANING / DISINFECTION SCHEDULE

Daily cleaning practices will be compliant with CDC guidelines, including the types of cleaning products used and the frequency of cleaning. Special attention will be paid to the cleaning of high touch surfaces throughout the day. All bathrooms will be disinfected twice daily by our in-house custodian and the nightly cleaning crew will continue to clean and disinfect the school in the evening. Once every two weeks, the entire school will be treated with the Enviro Mist application, an EPA-approved, concentrated probiotic microflora spray that leaves behind a powerful protective barrier which helps to discourage bacterial growth and promotes a healthy environment.

HEALTH SCREENINGS

Families will be asked to monitor their household members for COVID-19 symptoms, including fever and gastrointestinal concerns, and to avoid bringing sick children to school. As mandated by the St. Louis City Department of Health, daily temperature and symptom screenings will be conducted for all students, employees, and visitors to campus. Students who develop symptoms while they are at school will be separated from other students, and parents/guardians will be contacted to arrange for pick-up within the hour. (Please note: we are still in the process of determining how best to conduct the health screenings in a way that does not complicate morning drop-off for families. More information will be shared before school begins.)

UPDATED SICK POLICY AND ENFORCEMENT PRACTICES

Sick policies for students and employees are being enhanced and will be strictly enforced to minimize the number of sick people on campus, as well as to allow continuity of learning from home for quarantined, mildly ill, or asymptomatic students. More details about our continuity of learning plan and sick policy, including symptoms to check for and who to notify if sick, will be shared in the back to school mailing on August 7th.

QUARANTINE AND CONTACT TRACING

If a student or employee has a COVID-19 infection, the St. Louis City Department of Health will be notified and the School will support the Department's efforts with contact tracing. The Department of Health will help determine who may be infected and their contacts and will enforce the requisite quarantine. Additionally, Amber Odom, New City School's administrative assistant, will be completing an online contact tracing course from Johns Hopkins University before school begins, giving us an additional in-house resource. Again, the grouping of students in distinct cohorts is designed to limit the number of individuals that may need to be quarantined.

CAFETERIA/ FOOD SERVICE / ALLERGIES

All students will eat either in their rooms or outside, weather permitting. We are working with Byrne Catering, our food service provider, to understand what options may be available for individually packaged lunches for students. **Given that we are no longer able to provide a peanut free space in the cafeteria for lunch, all foods brought to school for snack and lunch must be peanut and tree nut free.**

OTHER SAFE CLASSROOM PRACTICES

Teaching methods will be adjusted to minimize the sharing of equipment and learning materials between students; classroom practices will reduce transfer of objects between home and school and touching of other students' personal belongings; infrastructure will be put in place to minimize the use of surfaces and materials that cannot easily be disinfected. Windows will remain open for ventilation and we will also utilize our outdoor spaces for classwork as often as possible.

MENTAL HEALTH / SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

Our counselor, Missey Doll, will continue to work with teachers to help provide attention to student mental health and social emotional well-being as we plan for our children's return to the classroom after such a long separation. This continues to be a stressful time and we are mindful of elevated levels of anxiety or worry on the part of our students and families. There will be a lot of new rules and routines for all of us to understand and we will work to create understanding of them in a manner that is consistent with our mission and values.

FIELD TRIPS AND CAMPING TRIPS

As mandated by the City of St. Louis Department of Health, all field trips and camping trips will be suspended, at least through the fall. Our younger students often take neighborhood walks which support their curriculum; many grades also take walking trips to Forest Park throughout the year. Our cohorts of children will still continue those trips with measures in place to ensure social distancing from others. We do have dates confirmed for the 4th, 5th, and 6th Grade camping trips in the spring in the event that we can conduct those activities later in the year.

PARENTS AND VISITORS ON CAMPUS

All visitors to campus, including parents, will be screened upon arrival. Non-essential visitors will be prohibited from entering school. Entry into the building will be limited for parents for now. Culturally, we know this is a very big change, given how much we welcome parents and encourage them to be a part of the community. However, limiting entry into the building is yet another safety step we can take to help limit the transmission of COVID-19. When parents do need to enter the building (dropping an item off, picking up a child early) they will need to wear a face covering, undergo a health screening, and practice social distancing. (Provisions will certainly be made when we have a separation issue at drop-off between a child and their parent.)

PLANNING FOR THE START OF SCHOOL AND DAILY SCHEDULES

You will receive information about who your child's teacher will be on August 7th, and you will have the opportunity to schedule an intake conference for the evening of August 13th or during the day on 14th. While these parent-teacher intake conferences are normally held later in the year, we want to accelerate the process of building relationships and getting to know you and your family this year.

In some cases, classrooms have been configured to allow for social distancing. Some classes will have moved locations in order to provide larger spaces for instruction and facilitate social distancing. That information is age group/grade specific and will be communicated in the back to school mailing on August 7th.

Again, in order to avoid the mixing of student cohorts, the movement of students between classrooms will be limited throughout the day. At various times, different faculty will move between classrooms to provide instruction to children. Being outdoors as much as possible is another safety precaution we can take, and we are fortunate to have an abundance of outdoor space. Opportunities for play and engagement with the outdoors also remain vital to our students' health and well-being and will remain important features of the New City School experience. We have mapped our outside space and divided it up into recess and play space, instructional space, and lunch/snack space. Per the CDC, outdoor playgrounds at schools do not require disinfection. However, we have developed a protocol regarding hand sanitation for children before, during, and after playground use.

WHEN SOMEONE IS SICK

Our daily health screenings and culture of shared responsibility will work together to help prevent students and employees from coming to school sick. Should a child or employee get sick or present with COVID-19 like symptoms at school we will:

- Isolate the student until the child can be picked up by a parent or guardian. Any sick employee will be sent home immediately.
- Advise the child's parent or guardian or the employee to contact a healthcare provider immediately. The healthcare provider will be able to determine whether the symptoms are a result of COVID-19 infection or if there are other health issues present.

Should there be a community member who tests positive for COVID-19, we will immediately contact the City of St. Louis Department of Health and follow their guidance regarding quarantine situations, possible contact tracing, classroom or school closure, notification of community, and sanitizing protocols.

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL PROCEDURES

We are still in the process of developing our arrival and dismissal plans. As you can imagine, without a dedicated area in our residential neighborhood for cars to line up, dropping off and dismissing students safely is a logistical challenge and we may need to stagger our arrival and dismissal times by a few minutes. Our initial planning is to utilize multiple entrances and exits – one designated for each age group/grade in the school. That will facilitate social distancing practices and help with the health and temperature screenings that we are required to have in place for all students daily. As of right now, our plans do restrict parents from dropping children off in their classrooms. This is not an issue for our older children but it might be for our youngest ones, and our plan will address this. The arrival and dismissal procedures (and relevant map) will be communicated to you on August 7th.

EXTENDED DAY AND EARLY MORNING CARE

Currently, we are prioritizing the Extended Day program and are continuing to think through how best to use our resources to appropriately supervise children while maintaining the integrity of the discrete cohorts we will create. In the back to school mailing on August 7th, we will ask you to let us know if you are planning on utilizing the Extended Day program so that we can make the appropriate arrangements. **We do know that we are going to start the year without offering early morning care. Once the year gets off to a start, we will reconsider how to manage this program. Please be in touch with us if this poses a hardship for your family so we can try and make special arrangements.**

THE 3/4s AND 4/5s

Because of New City School's designation as a licensed exempt child care facility by the State of Missouri and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, our youngest students fall into a unique category. As a result of this classification, there is a possible scenario next year that if schools are closed but the City of St. Louis allows child care centers to operate (to provide care not just for the children of first responders but for all children), there is a very strong chance that New City will choose to remain open and provide care for our 3/4s and 4/5s, thus eliminating the need for remote learning for those grade levels. We will keep 3/4s and 4/5s families updated on this possibility as the year progresses. Unfortunately, because child care facilities are intended only for children up to age 5 and younger than Kindergarten, only 3/4s and 4/5s students are eligible to be considered if this scenario comes to pass.

REMOTE LEARNING

Our goal is to sustain in-person instruction in a safe and healthy manner for our community. Of course, there is the possibility that the Health Department, government officials or simply an unsafe level of COVID-19 transmission throughout the region will force us to close. If that is the case, we will revert to our remote learning plan for all students (with a possible exception for the 3/4s and 4/5s, as explained above). We have spent time this summer engaged in professional development to enhance our remote teaching skills and an update on that work, details on the improvements we have made since the spring, and our plan for remote learning will be disseminated along with the back-to-school mailing.

RESOURCES FOR DECISION MAKING

We have utilized a number of resources during this intense period of planning and preparation. Below is a listing of many of the organizations and publications that have provided resources and support:

- *St. Louis City Department of Health*. There are a number of mandates they have issued that all City schools must follow in order to operate.
- *The Centers for Disease Control (CDC)*. The CDC continues to be a primary source guiding the City and St. Louis County Health Departments. Their resources and findings have been helpful as we respond and plan.
- *Independent Schools of St. Louis (ISSL)*. The St. Louis independent school community is small, and the Heads of schools have been meeting regularly since late March. We share information, work to stay aligned with City and County guidelines, and communicate frequently with each other, sharing resources and ideas.
- *National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS)*. Since March, NAIS has offered several high-quality webinars and articles on the reopening of schools, curriculum and instruction, and the science of COVID-19. The faculty and administrative team have taken advantage of these resources as we have planned for the coming year. NAIS has also offered legal and governance resources that have been invaluable, in addition to providing a platform for Head of Schools to connect nationally and share documents, resources, and ideas.
- *Independent Schools Association of the Central States (ISACS)*. ISACS is our accrediting body and they are offering many strong resources as well, including connecting schools throughout the region so we can talk and share ideas. Their webinars have also focused on preparing for reopening schools and the challenges and opportunities associated with remote learning.
- *The New City School Board of Trustees*. While the Board has been particularly active during this challenge, we have a small group of Trustees who have met several times to plan for re-opening. Specifically, they have worked on a number of new health and safety policies that will need to be implemented, in addition to monitoring

expenses related to the additional resources needed to operate school in this new environment.

- *The New City School Medical Advisory Team.* We are deeply grateful to these four parents, which comprises three infectious disease epidemiologists and one pediatrician. They have volunteered their time and expertise and have been providing advice and counsel to New City School since March. They will continue to serve in an advisory role as we make health and safety decisions for the NCS community.

- Harvard School of Public Health “Risk Reduction Strategies for Reopening Schools”
- The American Academy of Pediatrics “COVID-19 Planning Considerations: Guidance for School Re-entry”
- Missouri School Boards’ Association “Pandemic Recovery Considerations: Re-entry and Reopening of Schools”
- The Punahou (HI) School “Return to Campus Plan 2020-2021”
- Copenhagen International School “Reopening Plan”

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

We understand that you may likely have additional questions that have not been answered in this initial plan. Rest assured that more information will be forthcoming in our Return to School Update, which we will send on August 7th. The back to school mailing will be sent at the same time and will share further details about the start of school, pick-up and drop-off procedures, sick policies and more. And if you have any questions or concerns about this document, school policy, or our preparations please also contact any member of the administrative team:

Alexis Wright, Head of School; awright@newcityschool.org

Shawn Runge, Director of Finance and Operations; srunge@newcityschool.org

Melanie Harmon, Director of Enrollment Management; mharmon@newcityschool.org

Laurie Smilack, Upper Elementary Division Head; lsmilack@newcityschool.org

Janine Gorrell, Early Elementary Division Head; jgorrell@newcityschool.org

Shannon Reynolds, Director of Advancement; sreynolds@newcityschool.org

Please understand that this plan represents our best thinking at the moment. We have tried to anticipate as much as possible, but as we have seen over the past few months, the landscape with regard to this pandemic changes quickly, and we all need to continue to be flexible and understand that changes will be inevitable. You have our pledge that we will continue to communicate as thoroughly as we can and in as timely a fashion as possible. Thank you for your support and participation in the New City School community.

This form will be sent home with the back to school mailing. We will ask that all families sending their children to school complete and sign this Agreement. It is included now so you can see what we will ask you to agree with.

NEW CITY SCHOOL 2020 FAMILY AGREEMENT

Responding to COVID-19 means the entire New City community will need to adapt a new culture of shared responsibility. This Family Agreement is asking for every family's cooperation and support as we all work to ensure that our full community is doing what it can to prevent COVID-19 from entering our school community. Together, we are all working to get through this challenge in as safe and strong a manner as possible.

New City School understands that it is the parents' decision to permit their child(ren) to attend on-site school programs at New City School. The school will implement management and control measures in accordance with relevant St. Louis City and CDC regulations to mitigate the risk of the spread of COVID-19. **Do keep in mind however, that managing risks does not mean there will be no transmission. There is no such thing as zero risk.** We can take measures that will mitigate the chances of the spread at school, however, parents are also responsible for taking measures to mitigate the risk that their child(ren) may present to their own health or the health of others when on school grounds.

Complete the following: (please print)

1. I, _____(parent full name), hereby certify that:
2. ___ I agree to monitor my child(ren)'s health each day and keep my child(ren) home if he/she has a fever at or above 100.4 degrees, cough, fatigue, diarrhea, nausea, vomiting and/or other physical symptoms that require observation, health isolation, or medical treatment.
3. ___ I agree to notify the school immediately (and before my child(ren) arrive at school) if my child(ren) at any time come into contact with a COVID-19 positive individual and/or have been in a high transmission area. In such a case, I agree to abide by any additional management or control measures that the school deems prudent or advisable.
4. ___ I understand that the school will take my child(ren)'s temperature before entering the school building each day. If my child has a fever of 100.4 or above, he or she will be isolated and you will be contacted and the child must be picked up by a parent or legal guardian within one hour.
5. ___ If my child is sent home he or she cannot return to school for at least 48 hours from the day he or she is sent home and upon return, must be symptom-free and fever-free without medication.
6. ___ I understand that the School may require a physician's release in order for my child to return to school after any such illness.
7. ___ I agree to accept the management and control measures taken by the school in accordance with relevant regulations to reduce the spread of COVID-19.
8. ___ I understand that these are risk-management measures and that the school cannot guarantee safety for all students or prevent them from contracting any illness.
9. ___ It is understood that except on specific occasions parents may not enter the building and must follow the drop-off and pick up procedure as outlined by the school.
10. ___ I understand that the school may put travel restrictions in place at various times during the school year. I understand that travel by household members to specific locations may mean that my child(ren) cannot return to school until the 15th day after a return to St. Louis.

By voluntarily enrolling my child(ren) in the School, I acknowledge and agree that I am assuming the risk of my child(ren) or myself possibly contracting COVID-19. Further, I acknowledge and agree that on my behalf and on behalf of my child(ren) I am voluntarily waiving any claim of liability against the School should my child(ren) or I contract COVID-19 during the course of the School year and/or the 14-day period following the end of the School year. Further, I expressly agree to hold the School harmless should I and/or my child(ren) contract COVID-19 as a result of our participation in School. I further acknowledge and agree that it could be necessary to close School due to orders from the federal, state or local government or Health Department.