



MINNESOTA STATE ACADEMIES FOR THE DEAF AND THE BLIND

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Minnesota State Academies Health and Safety Plan for Students, Staff, and Visitors

**Updated as of September 1, 2023*

Guiding Principles

The Minnesota State Academies (MSA) are committed to providing safe and healthy campuses for our students, families, community, and employees. Decisions that were previously mandated by different government agencies are now made by MSA administrators, using best practices, guidance, and information available to us.

Our health/safety plan will be reviewed periodically, and updates will continue to be implemented throughout the 2023-2024 school year in accordance with recommendations and/or guidelines from the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and as circumstances change on our campuses. While there are still some unknowns about the future of COVID-19 and its impact in Minnesota, our goal is to mitigate the potential for transmission of COVID-19 in our school and community and maintain the safety and health of everyone on our campuses.

We have tried to address different concerns that parents/families and employees have shared with us through this plan. In it, you will find answers to the questions that have been asked, including what safety protocols are required around the campus. Changes and updates to this plan will be communicated with students, parents, family members, and employees promptly.

At MSA, we have unique needs on our campus. Examples of our unique needs include:

- **We serve students from all over the state.**
- **About 40% of our students live on campus.**
- **We have a high percentage of students with health and/or other challenges.**
- **We also serve a wide range of age groups (12 months through age 22) on our campuses.**
- **Many of our staff fall within high-risk categories.**

Due to those factors, our health/safety plan may have additional details and limitations beyond the usual mitigation strategies in neighboring school districts. We hope that you understand our unique situation and thank you for your continued support.

Following these guidelines will require instruction, guidance, and support. We ask that you support your children's participation in school activities by:

- teaching them to follow MSA health and safety guidelines, including possible restrictions of their social interactions with others.
- helping them understand and practice social distancing and mask wearing, when required.
- helping them understand the importance of personal hygiene and handwashing.

MSA empowers every student to achieve, care, and thrive in an ever-changing world.

- teaching and modeling proper coughing and sneezing practices.
- emphasizing the serious nature of this pandemic as well as other contagious illnesses and respecting the concerns of others in the community.
- as appropriate, getting vaccinated/boosted and encouraging others to do the same.
- showing respect for those who may choose not to get vaccinated – there may be a variety of reasons for their decisions.

Thank you for all your questions, patience, and continued support.

Staying Up-to-Date with Vaccinations

We continue to encourage all staff and students to stay up to date on [routine vaccinations](#) as this is essential to prevent illness from many different infections. Vaccines reduce the risk of infection by working with the body's natural defenses to help safely develop immunity to disease. For COVID-19, [staying up to date with COVID-19 vaccinations](#) is the leading public health strategy to prevent severe disease.

Health Screening

For any illness, including COVID-19, the most important aspect of self-screening is to **Stay Home when Sick**. People who have symptoms of illness, respiratory or gastrointestinal infections, such as cough, fever, sore throat, vomiting, or diarrhea, should stay home. Please stay home until 24 hours fever-free (without fever-reducing medication) and symptoms are significantly improved. Testing is recommended for people with symptoms of COVID-19. Staying home when sick can lower the risk of spreading infectious diseases, including COVID-19, to other people. **At-Home COVID-19 tests are available to staff and students (as long as supplies are available) from our health services department. Please call health services or speak with your supervisor if requesting an at-home test kit.**

Employees who stay home when sick should communicate with their supervisor following established call-in procedures. If they test positive for COVID-19, please also notify Human Resources.

Upon arrival on campus or during the day, students who display symptoms of illness will be immediately referred to Health Services and our nurses will evaluate the students to determine if they can stay in school or must go home. **Parents are responsible to have a plan to immediately pick up their child at any time that they might become sick throughout the year, including a back-up plan in case of severe weather and/or parent illnesses/conflicts.**

Students staying in our dorms will also be observed for symptoms by our residential educators. Students are encouraged to report symptoms and visit the health center for additional support as needed.

In most cases, transportation companies will not be responsible for transporting students back home if the student displays a fever or additional symptoms. This underscores the importance of doing a health self-screening before sending students to school on district-provided transportation.

We continue urge all families to practice healthy social distancing, hand hygiene, cough etiquette, and other mitigation measures at home and/or activities in the community, especially during interactions in large crowds, closed indoor spaces, and so forth so that exposure is minimized on our campuses. We have students from all over Minnesota and cross-contagion is something that we want to avoid as much as possible. Please continue to be aware of COVID-19 contagion levels in your area. [\(CDC's COVID-19 by County\)](#)

Other Safety Precautions

We have established and will continue enhanced sanitation measures including frequent cleaning and disinfection of all classrooms, activity spaces, bathroom facilities, and residential spaces via an ionization process which involves spraying down each space with specially designed equipment which kills 99.9 percent of all viruses and bacteria. We have also installed specialized ionization systems to our HVAC system to provide an additional layer of sanitization to all our buildings.

We will continue to encourage everyone to wash their hands frequently throughout the day.

Updates to our Plan

The MSA Instructional Leadership Team will continue to monitor health data and other factors and will send out communication to staff/families if there are changes in our health/safety protocols – as necessary, we may have to bring back restrictions and guidelines in previous versions of this health and safety plan to protect our students and staff. We will communicate status changes to students, parents/families, staff, and visitors promptly.