



March 13, 2020

Dear Pastors and School Principals:

Yesterday, diocesan leadership met with Dr. Randall Williams, director of the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services regarding COVID-19. This collaborative meeting was set to establish some guidelines for churches, the liturgy, schools, and the greater community. As these guidelines are developed, we will be providing them to you and others on our diocesan website, [diojeffcity.org](http://diojeffcity.org).

First, some facts. The State of Missouri has two confirmed cases of COVID-19 and has not established community transmission across the state. However, public health officials anticipate community transmission will impact Missouri in the future. Currently, the elderly are most impacted and at risk. We are continually monitoring the rates of infection and taking guidance directly from the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services.

Until there is a confirmed case of community transmission, the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services is not recommending the closure of places of worship or schools. Additionally, if places of worship and schools remain open it is not necessary to cancel events related to these entities. With that being said, low or poor attendance related to community fears could be a reason to cancel.

Our schools face unique challenges regarding travel for staff, students, and community members. Guidelines for travel are as follows:

1. School personnel or students traveling internationally from countries with declared high rates of community transmission: China, Iran, South Korea, and all of Europe, including Great Britain, must quarantine for 14 days following their travel.
2. School personnel or students traveling domestically to areas of high community transmission must observe a 14-day self-quarantine. Those states currently include Washington, California, and New York. This is a rapidly changing list and could change at any time.
3. School personnel and students should be discouraged from both international and domestic travel, unless absolutely necessary. When individuals leave on a trip, the area might not have community transmission. However, this could change rapidly upon their return and require a 14-day self-quarantine.

If the State of Missouri establishes community transmission, schools may be required to close. If a local public school chooses to close due to community transmission, the local Catholic school

will follow suit. Additionally, the Diocese of Jefferson City could mandate the closure of the entire Catholic school system. Please begin preparing plans with your local school community in case of these circumstances.

In case of a school closure, schools should thoughtfully consider the following:

1. Do our school families have reliable technology and internet to access online coursework?
2. If so, can the school provide reasonable online work to supplement instruction missed? For example, does the school use Google classroom or other online resources?
3. What is the most essential learning for students? How can we prioritize the essential learning standards for students?
4. School closures could happen for both a short or extended length of time.

Schools experiencing closure should also consider how to assist families in need. If you have a family experiencing food insecurity, we want to support them. COVID-19 will undoubtedly impact the most vulnerable in our society. By keeping a list of these families, Catholic Charities and the local parish can help provide resources to those in need.

In the case of school closure, non-exempt employees will be paid by the school and parish. This could include the opportunity to work from home. From the point of closure, all employees will maintain their current benefits. The fact that schools may close will not result in a loss of benefits.

As recently as this morning, the Center for Disease and Control sent out revised guidelines for schools. Here is a link for the [Guidance for School Settings](#). Additionally, the Center for Disease and Control has provided guidance for school closure decisions. Here is the link for the [Considerations for School Closures](#). This could be very helpful in assessing the needs of your community at the local level.

Please continue to use an abundance of caution in establishing all cleaning and hygiene procedures in your community. Please take all reasonable and prudent measures to help maintain a positive Christ-like environment that is a beacon of hope.

We will continue to keep you informed as information is made available. Please continue to pray for those making complex health care decisions across our nation and for those in the health care industry.

Sincerely,

Ms. Fuemmeler  
Interim Superintendent  
Catholic Schools Office  
Diocese of Jefferson City