



# The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington

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January 31, 2022

Dear Parents and Guardians,

I have received feedback from parents/guardians concerning the letter shared last week regarding updates to isolation and quarantine guidance to families. In the letter, I communicated information regarding existing immunization policies of The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington (ADW). I apologize for the confusion this letter may have caused.

The immunization policy shared was extracted from our updated policy manual, drafted in 2017. While we have an existing policy on required vaccines, please let me be very clear how the ADW is approaching the student COVID-19 vaccine.

The archdiocese follows the District of Columbia and state of Maryland immunization requirements. The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington Catholic Schools is not enforcing a COVID-19 vaccine mandate for the current school year. .

## **Archdiocesan Schools in the District of Columbia**

As we previously shared, the District of Columbia has mandated the COVID-19 vaccine mandate for all students attending public and non-public schools in the District and will be fully implementing this requirement for the 2022-23 school year. We are still awaiting further guidance from the District on exactly how this process will be administered, including whether there will be any new forms for parents and providers to use to document vaccination doses or to obtain a religious or medical exemption. If the District does not timely provide this information, the Archdiocese will publish its own procedures to ensure that parents can easily share vaccination data and request a COVID-19 vaccine exemption for medical or serious moral objections.

## **Archdiocesan Schools in the State of Maryland**

At this point, neither the State of Maryland nor any of the local counties within the Archdiocese have mandated the COVID-19 vaccine for the 2022-23 school year. The Archdiocese has no plans to require the COVID-19 vaccine for our school students, absent a legal mandate to do so. It is still important for parents who have vaccinated their children to provide this information to the school, as this data will assist in making policy and operational decisions (including with respect to masking protocols).

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### **Masks in the District of Columbia and Maryland**

The required use of masks in ADW schools continues to be monitored. Cases are trending down throughout the region following the omicron surge in January, and vaccination rates are increasing among our staff and student populations. Both of these are positive signs. We ask all schools to continue the use of masks for students and school employees, as a mitigation and preventative strategy. We will continue to monitor local regulations, the guidance of public health officials, case rates in each region, and vaccination rates of students and staff in evaluating whether to make masks optional for the remainder of this school year. No decision has been made regarding the use of masks in the 2022-2023 school year.

I apologize, if any aspect of my original message was confusing or unclear. I hope this update provides you with some clarity for what to expect regarding vaccines and masking in the coming months and the next school year.

Thank you for your partnership in working with school leadership throughout this pandemic. It is a privilege to partner with you to educate your child and form him/her in the Catholic faith. Please know of my prayers for your families and our school communities.

Happy Catholic Schools Week!

In Peace,



Kelly Branaman  
Secretary for Catholic Schools  
Superintendent of Schools