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Dear OLSS Families,

I hope everyone had a wonderful summer; we are looking forward to a successful year of in school learning this year. As you know, this summer gave us some relief from the words "COVID" and "masks", we were able to relax a bit, gather with family and friends again and feel as if we were getting "back to normal."

Unfortunately, in the last month variants of COVID have made it increasingly difficult to keep the spread of the virus to the all-time lows we saw for the last couple months. In order to have another successful school year with no outbreaks, as we did last year, it is crucial that we all work together as a community to prevent the spread of illness so that we can maintain instruction in the school building. Please review the following OLSS guidelines which have been developed with the assistance of the Maryland Department of Health and Calvert County Health Department protocols and guidelines to assist us in maintaining proper safety precautions in the school. It is evident, by the mass school closures and quarantines currently occurring in the south that without proper precautions, the school is at risk for closures and quarantines. We are seeing cases both among vaccinated and unvaccinated in the community and both asymptomatic and symptomatic transmission. Please review these guidelines carefully to assist us in having another successful year.

COVID SYMPTOMS:

If your student develops ANY ONE of the following symptoms:

- New onset cough/shortness of breath
- Fever over 100.0
- Loss of taste/smell
- Headache
- Runny nose/congestion
- Body aches/ chills
- Diarrhea/nausea/vomiting
- Sore throat

You MUST contact the school nurse to discuss the situation surrounding symptoms and determine whether COVID testing needs to occur.

ALWAYS err on the side of caution and if a child wakes up with complaints of symptoms, keep them home to monitor to see if anything more develops. IF a student has complaints of the above symptoms they WILL be sent home and may be subject to COVID testing depending on the circumstances.

SCHOOL ABSENCE:

ALL absences MUST be screened for illness daily. IF your student will be absent for any reason, please contact the school and or the school nurse to make them aware. If not illness related, you can simply state the absence is unrelated to illness. IF your student is experiencing ANY symptoms of illness please contact the school nurse directly with date of onset of symptoms and each symptom your student is experiencing so next steps can be determined.

MAINTAINING PROPER PRECAUTIONS:

1. Please educate your children on proper wearing of mask (over the nose and the mouth, secure to the face) and be sure to provide a mask that fits to the child's face snugly with no gaps around the sides.
2. Students will be maintaining a distance of 3 feet while masked and 6 feet without masks (during lunch/recess). While older students have a better understanding of social distancing, it can be difficult for our younger students to maintain distance. Please show your children what 3 and 6 feet apart look like and remind our younger students to maintain space from their classmates
3. If your student is showing ANY symptoms of illness, Please keep them home and monitor for further development. This was KEY last year in preventing the spread of illness. Many times, a runny nose or "my throat hurts" may be nothing, but SOMETIMES it is more. By keeping a child home with complaints of a symptom, you can monitor and determine if it develops into anything more.

SCHOOL CLOSE CONTACTS:

A close contact in relation to school means **ALL students MUST maintain at LEAST 3 feet of space AND PROPER mask wearing.** A student who is less than 3 feet apart without proper mask wearing for 15 minutes or longer WILL be subject to quarantine any time a positive case is identified within a classroom. IF the students are able to maintain consistent distancing of 3 feet while masked/6 feet while not masked they will not be considered exposed and can continue learning in school. It is crucial that we work both in and outside of school to teach our students proper masking and distancing to prevent unwanted quarantines due to exposure.

COVID EXPOSURE AND TESTING:

IF your students or anyone within the household has a known COVID exposure, OR develops any of the symptoms on the above COVID list, you **MUST** report an exposure or symptoms to the school nurse for further evaluation and further instruction. Students should NOT return to school until further guidance is received.

Acceptable COVID testing will vary dependent on the situation, exposure, vaccination status, and many other variables. A single NEGATIVE rapid test is NEVER accepted and will not provide acceptable results for return to school. A NEGATIVE home testing kit is also currently not being accepted at this time as there are many variables that can affect the test. **Any rapid POSITIVE test WILL be accepted as a positive case.** Providers within the area MAY state that other testing is acceptable, however OLSS will only accept testing that is approved after reviewing each individual case.

Symptomatic parents, students, and staff must present either ONE negative PCR test OR 2 rapid negative test results separated by at least 48 hours apart to return to school. Rapid tests are recommended not to be completed until 3-5 days after onset of symptoms for the most accurate results. Please ALWAYS reach out to the school nurse to determine what testing is acceptable for your particular situation as every scenario is different.

COVID TESTING AT OLSS:

COVID testing IS available to students and staff at OLSS. If a parent would like a student to test, **a parent must be present at the school during the test, consent must be signed, and parent must present a valid ID that must be scanned to complete the COVID testing process.** The first of two rapid tests can be completed at the school, a second rapid would need to be completed elsewhere as to prevent students returning to school when ill. PCR tests may also be completed. These tests are done through the company MAKO located in Texas. PCR tests will be mailed out daily after school and results will take approximately 5-7 days.

Please Note: Those students that are patients at Bayshore Pediatrics - I highly recommend ALL testing be completed with your pediatric group as they have access to **SAME DAY PCR RESULTS.** This is highly

accurate testing that provides results within 15 minutes of testing, providing the ability for students to return to school quicker.

QUARANTINE VS ISOLATION:

Those who are exposed to a positive COVID case or are awaiting COVID results related to symptoms may be asked to quarantine. This means the parent, student, and or family member needs to remain home and is either monitoring for potential symptoms related to an exposure OR awaiting results from testing.

Those who test POSITIVE for COVID will need to remain in **isolation** for 10-14 days. Isolation means that the positive person must completely separate from ALL healthy individuals in the house with NO contact. They may NOT share eating spaces, bathrooms, or be within the same room or space as the healthy individuals. Close contacts **CANNOT** start their quarantine until they are no longer being exposed to the positive case. The rationale for this is the positive case can shed and pass on the virus for 10-14 days, those close contacts can then potentially contract the virus and become infected within the NEXT 10-14 days.

IF parents/students/family members cannot completely isolate away from a positive case within the home, quarantine CANNOT begin for healthy individuals until the LAST day of isolation for the positive case. For example, Mom tests positive for COVID and has two students in school. Mom is primary caregiver and continues to care for students. Mom is to isolate for 10 days. The students quarantine would start when mom's ends. Students would be out for approximately 20 days and return on day 21 to school. Please note that isolation and quarantine times are dependent on age, ability to maintain precautions, vaccination status, etc. Each individual case MUST be presented to the school nurse who will consult with the health department on further instruction. Please be sure to contact the school nurse AS SOON as an exposure or symptoms are identified.

This continues to be a trying time for everyone. We all would like to see everything "back to normal" and return to everyday life for students, staff, and families. For now, we must continue to lean on each other as a community, work together, provide support, and care for one another, and protect each other's health. While many of us are healthy, we have many in our community who are vulnerable. It is our duty to work as a team to ensure we maintain precautions and protect the health and safety of our OLSS community. Please do not hesitate to reach out for any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Brandi Hutchins
OLSS School Nurse
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