

**Safe Return of In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan**  
***Updated May 2021***

In January 2021, the Autism Academy of Learning joined schools across Ohio in signing a Commitment to Return to In-Person or Hybrid Learning by March 1, 2021. By virtue of this commitment, the Academy's eligible employees were included in Phase 1B of Ohio's COVID-19 vaccination program.

The statewide school building closure experienced in the spring of 2020 were particularly disruptive to the Academy's student population who require a higher level of consistency and for whom daily support and remote learning were less effective. Further, remote learning places a high burden on our students' parents, who have varying abilities to be available in the home to assist with remote learning opportunities. As such, the Academy has assessed that the "hybrid" model, which combines both in-person and remote learning, is not ideal to further effective learning. The Academy's plan for its students seeks to maintain as much continuity as possible.

The Academy has adopted a "stoplight" system denoting which method of instructional delivery it is using. At this time, the Academy intends to re-open with in-person learning on a full-time basis effective March 1, 2021. However, the Academy has also developed a plan for remote learning in the event the school building is closed or any of the students are required to self-quarantine for any period of time. Color changes will be communicated through the Academy's one call phone system and through local media.

**Stoplight System**

**Green** (Traditional in-person all-day school)

- To enable safe and appropriate transportation and entry/departure from the school building, the Academy will operate with staggered school schedules, as follows:
  - Orange, Silver, Blue, Red, Brown – 8:15-2:15
  - Yellow, Gold, Green, Purple– 9:15-3:15
- Student/staff health assessments daily, including temperature checks (must be under 100 degrees)
- All staff and students age 12 and over have the option to wear masks or face shields. All students are encouraged to wear masks while on Academy vans.
  - If a student cannot wear or tolerate a mask or face shield due to a health or developmental reason, the Academy reserves the right to request appropriate medical documentation.
- Frequent handwashing and use of hand sanitizer
- Increased cleaning of building/classrooms, at least daily
- Following social distancing guidelines to the extent possible
- Parent/Teacher Conferences, Open House held virtually

### **Yellow** (Temporary remote learning)

In the event of a positive test, and determined in conjunction with the local health department, the Academy may assess that it is appropriate for particular students/staff or for an entire classrooms to quarantine and move to remote learning temporarily to reduce the risk of further exposure or spread within the school building. In this event, students in those classrooms will participate in remote learning opportunities as outlined in the “Red” category below.

### **Red** (Remote Learning)

- The Academy will only close if required to do so by the Governor’s order or by the state or local health department.
- Daily instruction will come from Blizzard Bags compiled by classroom teachers for students. Should the closure extend beyond two weeks, the Academy will assess whether it will employ additional learning delivery methods.
- IEP needs will be assessed on a case-by-case basis, and the Academy will work with parents to develop and appropriate plan for the provision of services.

### **Health and Safety Protocols**

The health and safety of our students and staff are our top priority as we plan for how to reopen the school. The Autism Academy of Learning requires the following hygiene and social distancing protocols to be followed at all times.

### **Masks and Face Shields**

- All staff have the option to wear masks or face shields
  - AAL will provide masks to staff, or staff will be able to wear their own masks if they have one.
- Students have the option to wear masks or face shields on the van.
  - AAL will provide masks to students who need them, or students will be allowed to wear their own masks if they have one.
- All students over age 12 have the option to wear masks or face shields while in the school building, and all other students are strongly encouraged to do so, to the extent possible.
  - Students may be given mask “breaks” when they are able to be socially distanced, preferably outdoors.
  - AAL will provide masks to students who need them, or students will be allowed to wear their own masks if they have one.
- If a student cannot wear or tolerate a mask or face shield due to a health or developmental reason, the Academy reserves the right to request appropriate medical documentation.

## **Health Screenings**

- Families are encouraged to notify the Academy if the student has received a COVID-19 vaccination.
- Families are required to conduct home assessments of their student's health each day before sending them to school.
  - Students with temperatures of 100 degrees or higher, without fever-reducing medication, or other known COVID-19 symptoms are not permitted to come to school.
  - If being transported by the Academy, student temperatures will be taken prior to getting on the van by the school van driver and students with a temperature of 100 degrees or higher are not permitted to enter the van. Parents must remain with students until the temperature has been taken.
  - Students being dropped off will have their temperature taken upon entry into the building, and students with a temperature of 100 degrees or higher are not permitted to remain at school. Parents dropping students off must remain at the Academy until the student's temperature is taken.
- Staff are required to notify the Academy whether, and on what dates, they have received the COVID-19 vaccination, if applicable.
- Staff are required to conduct a self-assessment of their own health before reporting to work each day.
- Families should be prepared to make arrangements for pick-up of students who become ill during the school day.
- The Academy will have a separation room (room next to the principal's office) for students who are feeling ill and awaiting pick-up from their parent or guardian.

## **Hygiene Protocols**

- Appropriate and thorough handwashing for at least 20 seconds is encouraged, and the Academy will provide frequent scheduled breaks throughout the day for students to wash hands.
- Staff and students must use refillable water bottles and are not permitted to drink directly from water fountains.

## **Building Safety**

- Social distancing will be maintained in classrooms and all common areas, avoiding crowds, and staying at least 6ft away from others when possible.
  - Physical barriers will be put in place where it is difficult to maintain social distancing.
  - To accommodate for social distancing in the classroom, administration and teachers have rearranged classrooms and common areas.
  - The Academy will provide visual cues in hallways indicating appropriate distance.
- Hand sanitizer will be available throughout the school building.
  - Hand sanitizer stations will be placed at the front or back entryways.

- Limited visitors or volunteers will be allowed into the building.
- No in-person field trips will be allowed.
- AAL Staff will thoroughly clean and disinfect school building each night after in-person classes. The Academy also will continue to have a cleaning company come in regularly during the week to clean and sanitize the building.
  - In the event of a positive COVID test, any affected classroom, common area, or van will receive a deep cleaning and sanitization.
- The Academy will maintain a sufficient amount of personal protective and sanitation supplies, including but not limited to soap, hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, tissues, and disposable face masks.

### **Transportation**

Due to the challenges associated with social distancing and van rider capacity, the number of students riding on the school vans will be reduced. The Autism Academy will continue to provide transportation to those students who qualify for transportation but encourage parents to transport students whenever possible.

- All staff and students are encouraged to wear a mask or face shield while on the van.
  - If a student cannot wear or tolerate a mask or face shield due to a health or developmental reason, the Academy reserves the right to request appropriate medical documentation. The Academy may work with the student's parents to develop alternative transportation.
- Van routes will have no more than four students per route and no more than six people in the van, including the driver and rider, if applicable.
  - Students will be arranged in the van with students sitting on opposite sides and rows.
  - To the extent practical, students in the same classrooms will be transported together.
- Vans will be cleaned and sanitized after each route.

### **Classroom**

The students and staff of the Autism Academy will be in assigned self-contained classrooms with limited movement around the building.

- Students will have their own materials. No sharing between students.
- Frequent breaks throughout the day for handwashing (arrival, after morning centers, before/after lunch, after using the restroom, prior to going home).
  - Classroom staff are encouraged to remain attentive to students touching their mouths, noses, and eyes and increase handwashing/sanitizing when appropriate.
- Classroom staff are required to wear masks or face shields.
- All students over age 12 are encouraged to wear masks or face shields, and all other students are strongly encouraged to do so, to the extent possible.
- Hand sanitizer will be available in each classroom.

- Classroom staff will clean and sanitize materials in classroom throughout the day and at the end of the day after students go home.
- Desks arrangements will follow social distancing guidelines and be six feet apart. In areas where that is not possible, a divider will be put in place.
  - All desks will face the same direction.

### **Common Areas**

The Academy understands the needs of our population and wants all students to get the sensory input they need, but also must ensure the health and safety of students and staff.

- Playground will be open for classrooms to use.
  - One classroom at a time
  - Students will be asked to wash their hands prior to going outside and upon returning from the playground.
  - The playground will be cleaned and sanitized between use.
- Sensory room will be open for classrooms to use.
  - Swing must be sanitized after each use.
  - Students will wash hands before and after entering the sensory room.
  - Classrooms must bring their own sensory items into the room and take them back to their classroom, to avoid cross contamination.
- Arrival and dismissal area
  - Staff and students are required to wait in their classrooms until notified by the Office Manager that the van is here for those students.
  - No staff or students are permitted to wait by the back entranceway.
  - No staff or students are permitted to wait by the office manager's desk.
    - If a student is waiting for pick up, they must remain in their classroom.
    - If a student is sick, they will be placed in the separation room until their parent/guardian arrives.
- When students need to move or have a "change of scenery," they will only be allowed to walk around the building in areas where other students may be present.
  - Students can walk outside the perimeter of the building with staff.
  - Students and staff are required to observe social distancing and mask requirements while outside as well.
- Bathrooms
  - Bathrooms will be limited to no more than two students at a time.
  - Students not using the bathroom are not permitted to remain in the bathroom.
- Lunch
  - Classes will eat lunch within their own classrooms.
  - If items need warmed up, staff can use microwaves in lunchroom area.

### **Arrival and Dismissal of Students being Transported by Parents/Guardians**

- At Arrival/Dismissal, parents must pull to the front of the school building and call the school office number to notify school staff that a student is here or can be picked up.

The Office Manager will then notify the appropriate classroom to come and receive the student or bring student to go home.

- Parents may not enter the building unless necessary when dropping off or picking up students.
- Parents are expected to pick their child up within 15 minutes of the end of the school day. If unable to do so in that timeframe, parents must call the school or make other arrangements to ensure their child is picked up in the allotted time.

### **Training**

We understand the need to make sure the school environment is safe for our students and staff. Therefore, all staff are required to complete several professional development courses regarding Coronavirus, cleaning and disinfecting, and proper use of masks. Students will also receive guidance and periodic reminder regarding handwashing, hygiene, social distancing, mask wearing, and other safety protocols.

### **Exposure, Symptoms, and Confirmation of COVID-19**

#### **Illness or Possible Exposure While at Home or School**

- In the event that a staff member, student, someone in their household, or someone with whom they have close contact develops or displays symptoms of or tests positive for COVID-19, the staff member or student's parent should remain home and notify the Academy immediately.
  - The Academy will obtain additional information to determine appropriate next steps, if any, including contact tracing and appropriate notifications.
- If a staff or student develops a temperature over 100 degrees or other COVID-19 symptoms while at school, the staff/student will be sent home.
  - Students who become sick at school will be moved to the separation room (by principal's office) until parents/guardians arrive.
- COVID-19 symptoms are identified by the CDC to include:
  - Fever (100 degrees or higher) or chills
  - Cough
  - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
  - Fatigue
  - Muscle or body aches
  - Headache
  - New loss of taste or smell
  - Sore throat
  - Congestion or runny nose
  - Diarrhea
  - Nausea or vomiting

## **Return to School Protocols**

- Students and staff members who have been exposed to COVID-19 will not be allowed to return to school until:
  - Seven days after exposure, if they receive a negative COVID-19 test, which should occur on the fifth day or later after exposure; or
    - The Academy may request evidence of the negative test results.
  - Ten days after exposure, if they do not develop symptoms of COVID-19.
  - Individuals who received the COVID-19 vaccine two weeks or more before the exposure or who tested positive for COVID-19 within the previous three months will not be required to quarantine, unless the local health department advises otherwise.
- Students and staff members who test positive or have symptoms of COVID-19 will not be allowed to return to school until:
  - The individual has been fever-free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication;
  - At least 10 days have passed since the onset of symptoms or the first positive test, whichever is later; and
  - Other symptoms of COVID-19 are improving.
- Quarantine lengths may be subject to change based on the recommendations of the individual's healthcare provider or the local health department.
- The Academy encourages students and staff members to comply with all federal, state, and local health order and to avoid traveling to areas known to have a higher risk of community spread of COVID-19 and to comply with any applicable quarantine period after traveling.

## **Contact Tracing and Notification of Potential Exposure**

If the Academy learns that a student or staff member may have COVID-19 or may have been exposed to someone with COVID-19, the Academy will implement the following procedure:

- The Academy will determine whether it is necessary or required to contact the local health department.
- The Academy will conduct internal contract tracing to determine which students or staff members may have had close contact (within six feet for 15 minutes or longer) with the individual in question.
  - If the student was not wearing a mask during the 14-day period prior to developing symptoms or receiving a positive test, all individuals in that student's classroom will be deemed to have had close contact, regardless of whether they were socially distanced from the individual.
  - The identity of the individual will be kept confidential during contact tracing unless the staff member or student's parent/guardian provides written consent to disclosure.

- The Academy will notify any individuals determined to have had close contact with the affected individual and recommend quarantine consistent with return to school protocols and health department directives.
  - To the extent practical, quarantining staff will be required to work remotely.
  - Quarantining students will continue with remote learning until they are permitted to return to school (Yellow).
- The Academy will notify all staff members and students/parents that there has been a potential exposure to the virus at the Academy and the date, time, and location of the potential exposure. The notice will advise staff members and students/parents that, while there is a known or suspected case in the Academy, no further action is needed on their part unless they have already been notified that they were a close contact.
  - The identity of the individual will be kept confidential.
  - This notice is designed to allow individuals to monitor themselves for symptoms and seek treatment or testing, if needed.
- The staff/student's classroom will be closed for at least 24 hours for deep cleaning and sanitizing before opening again for use, as well as any common areas and vans that may have been affected.

### **Confidentiality**

- The Academy is committed to complying with all applicable federal, state and local laws that protect the privacy of employees, students, and other individuals who have been screened for, been diagnosed with, or been exposed to COVID-19.
- Medical information reported to or obtained by the Academy is treated as confidential information. Every effort will be made to ensure procedurally sufficient safeguards are in place to maintain the privacy of employees and students.
- If administration is asked about a potentially exposed employee's or student's identity, they should reply that they are not permitted to disclose any individual's confidential medical information and direct any questions to the Principal.

***Any employee, student, or parent who feels that they cannot comply with, or objects to, any of the above protocols due to a medical, religious, or other reason or who has any questions about these protocols should contact the Principal.***