



## **COVID-19 Prevention Procedures and Testing Plan 2023-2024 School Year**

### **I. Introduction**

Over the course of the last few years, The Cottonwood School (referred to herein as the “Charter School”) has implemented a number of policies, protective measures, and best practices developed by national, state, and local public health experts with the intention of reducing the transmission and impact of COVID-19 on its students, employees, and community. These policies, measures, and practices were included in a COVID-19 Health and Safety Policy which helped guide school operations through the pandemic.

The COVID-19 state of emergency has now been terminated, and the threat posed by COVID-19 to our students, employees, and community is now less than it was at the height of the pandemic. As a result of these developments, many of the previously mandated practices are no longer legally mandatory, practically necessary, or recommended to be employed in school settings.

Nevertheless, the Charter School acknowledges that COVID-19 is likely to remain an ongoing potential threat to the health and safety of our students, employees, and community, and as such, some best practices should be maintained to reduce the incidence of infection and outbreaks on campus. Additionally, although the number of mandated COVID-19 response actions has greatly diminished following the termination of the state of emergency, there are still a number of legal requirements and duties with which the Charter School must comply.

For these reasons, the Charter School has retired the previous COVID-19 Health and Safety Plan and has replaced it with this COVID-19 Prevention Procedures and Testing Plan document (the “Plan”).

### **II. COVID-19 Testing Plan**

In September of 2022, the California Legislature passed SB 1479 which requires California schools to either create a COVID-19 testing plan or to adopt the most recently updated version of the COVID-19 testing framework published by the California Department of Public Health (“CDPH”). (Ed. Code, § 32096.)

In compliance with this requirement, the Charter School has adopted the COVID-19 Testing Plan that follows. The Testing Plan will be posted to the Charter Schools website as required by Education Code section 32096, subdivision (e)(1).

The Testing Plan consists of the following elements:

1. **Point of Contact.** The Charter School's COVID-19 Liaison is Summer Hottinger, [hr@cottonwoodk12.org](mailto:hr@cottonwoodk12.org).

This COVID-19 Liaison has responsibilities described in the COVID-19 Prevention Procedures part of this document and is also responsible for ensuring Charter School compliance with this Plan. The COVID-19 Liaison shall be informed of all positive COVID-19 cases among students and employees of the Charter School, which results will be securely maintained as confidential health information and reported only to state and local health departments as and when required by applicable law.

2. **Free Testing for Employees.** The Charter School will provide free COVID-19 testing during paid time and in a manner that ensures confidentiality to all employee close contacts exposed at work to a positive case during the positive case's infectious period. The infectious period is from two days before the positive case's first symptoms appeared until ten days after the first symptoms appeared, or until the fifth day since symptoms appeared if a negative test is received on or after the fifth day from symptom onset.
3. **Outbreak Testing.** During outbreaks or other heightened circumstances where the local public health agency's directions are required, the COVID-19 Liaison shall coordinate with the public health agency and shall implement any recommended testing strategies, in addition to the following. During confirmed outbreaks, the Charter School shall do each of the following:
  - a. provide free COVID-19 testing during paid time and in a manner that ensures confidentiality to all employees in the exposed group;
  - b. provide free testing on a weekly basis to all previously exposed employees who remain at the site; and
  - c. require employees exposed during an outbreak to test negative for COVID-19 within three to five days after the close contact exposure or be excluded from the workplace until ten days have passed from the date of exposure.
4. **Type of Testing.** The Charter School will use at-home antigen COVID-19 tests when tests are provided or administered to students or employees of the school.
5. **Awareness of Testing Resources.** The COVID-19 Liaison will maintain general awareness of testing resources and programs offered by federal, state, and local government entities; healthcare or insurance companies or organizations; and/or other entities. The COVID-19 Liaison will seek to facilitate access to testing resources for students and employees of the Charter School to the extent they are available.
6. **Awareness of Testing Recommendations.** The COVID-19 Liaison will maintain general awareness of any testing strategies recommended to be employed by state and local public health departments.
7. **Monitoring Community Case Rates.** The COVID-19 Liaison will maintain general awareness of local community case rates and consider more intensive testing solutions when warranted.

### **III. COVID-19 Prevention Procedures**

1. **COVID-19 Liaison.** As stated above, the Charter School's COVID-19 Liaison is Summer Hottinger, [hr@cottonwoodk12.org](mailto:hr@cottonwoodk12.org). The COVID-19 Liaison will be the first point of contact for (i) coordinating

and communicating with state and local public health departments and/or other government agencies with regard to matters related to COVID-19, (ii) communicating all required notices and directives to students and employees regarding close contact exposure, (iii) investigating close contact exposures, and (iv) ensuring Charter School compliance with this Plan.

2. **Identifying Students and Employees with Symptoms.** COVID-19 symptoms include fever of 100.4 or greater, chills, cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, or diarrhea. Individuals with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 should be excluded from school until they can be tested. If a COVID-19 test is negative, symptomatic individuals can return to work or school 24-hours after symptoms resolve and fever reduces. If a COVID-19 test is positive, individuals must isolate away from school or work, and must be directed to follow CDPH's isolation guidelines.
3. **Isolation.** COVID-19 cases must stay away from school until they have satisfied the following conditions:
  - a. At least 5 days have passed since symptom onset or, if asymptomatic, since their last positive test; AND
  - b. At least 24 hours have passed since resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications; AND
  - c. Other symptoms are not present, or symptoms are mild and improving.

Masks should continue to be worn by students up to the tenth day from symptom onset or the last positive (if asymptomatic) if the COVID-19 case is released from isolation before the tenth day from symptom onset of the last positive test (if asymptomatic).

4. **Employee Masking After Isolation.** Employees must wear a mask in the workplace up to the tenth day from symptom onset or last positive test (if asymptomatic) if the COVID-19 case is released from isolation before the tenth day from symptom onset of the last positive test (if asymptomatic).
5. **Post-Isolation Notification to Employees.** Upon excluding an employee from work, the Charter School shall give the employee information regarding COVID-19 related benefits to which the employee may be entitled under applicable federal, state, or local laws, including any benefits available under legally mandated sick leave, if applicable, workers' compensation law, local government requirements, the Charter School's own leave policies, and any leave guaranteed by contract, if any.
6. **Exposure; Close Contact.** An individual is considered exposed to a COVID-19 case and thus a "close contact" or part of an "exposed group" when they spend a cumulative total of fifteen minutes or more over a twenty-four hour period within the same indoor airspace of less than 400,000 cubic feet per floor. In large indoor airspaces greater than 400,000 cubic feet per floor, exposure to COVID-19 means being within six feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of fifteen minutes or more over a twenty-four hour period. If the CDPH changes this definition of close contact, the new definition shall be controlling. Upon discovering a COVID-19 Case, the Charter School must investigate and determine and notify the exposed group of close contacts.
7. **Close Contact Notification to Employees.** The Charter School shall notify all employees and independent contractors who were close contacts of a COVID-19 case on campus as soon as possible.

8. **Quarantine.** The Charter School's COVID-19 Liaison shall stay up to date on any state and local health department orders implementing mandatory quarantine periods for close contacts and shall comply with same.
9. **Reporting Positive Cases to Public Health.** The COVID-19 Liaison will report to the local public health department anytime there are three positive cases discovered within a single classroom, office, or other pre-defined group at the Charter School, when those positive cases are considered linked and were on campus at any point within a seven day period. If the local public health department issues guidance that differ from this obligation or require a different reporting method or threshold, the Charter School will comply with those directions.
10. **Outbreaks, Defined.** An Outbreak is defined by the CDPH as occurring when three or more COVID-19 cases are discovered in the same exposed group during a seven-day period.
11. **Outbreak Response Instructions.** If an Outbreak is verified by the local public health department, the Charter School will comply with all instructions received from the local public health department on how to respond to the Outbreak.
12. **Outbreak Testing.** Outbreak testing procedures are included in the COVID-19 Testing Plan, above.
13. **Outbreak Masking.** During an Outbreak, close contact employees in an exposed group must wear masks indoors and also outdoors when within six feet of another person, unless subject to exemption.
14. **Outbreak Ventilation.** During an Outbreak in a building or structure with mechanical ventilation, MERV-13 or greater filters will be used, or else the highest compatible filtration efficiency filters will be used. HEPA filtrations units will be used where ventilation remains inadequate to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission.
15. **Major Outbreaks.** If twenty or more employee COVID-19 cases in an exposed group were on campus during their infectious period within a thirty-day period, the Charter School will do the following:
  - a. Test all employees in the exposed group twice a week;
  - b. Report the outbreak to Cal/OSHA;
  - c. Provide respirators for voluntary use to employees in the exposed group, encourage their use, and train employees on respirator use; and
  - d. Require all employees not wearing respirators to maintain six feet of physical distancing where feasible.
16. **No Mask Discrimination.** The Charter School shall not prohibit any employee from wearing a mask or respirator voluntarily unless it would pose a safety hazard.
17. **Free Masks for Employees.** The Charter School will provide free, well-fitting medical masks and respirators (with instructions on proper fit) to all employees who work indoors and have contacts with others or who work in vehicles with others.
18. **Mask Exemptions.** Whenever masks are required to be worn by virtue of the elements of this Plan or by the order of a state or local public health department, the following exceptions shall apply:

- a. When eating or drinking, if at least six feet apart from others, and only if indoor-outdoor ventilation has been maximized to the extent feasible.
- b. When individuals are subject to an approved exemption due to a medical or mental health condition or disability that makes mask wearing intolerable, in which case individuals will be directed to wear the most effective non-restrictive alternative available, such as a face shield and drape, to the extent tolerable. The Charter School will follow all public health guidance pertaining to the approval of medical mask exemptions, which must be substantiated by consultation with a medical practitioner such as a medical doctor, nurse practitioner, or similar.
- c. During specific tasks which cannot feasibly or safely be performed while wearing a mask.
- d. For those under two years of age.
- e. When sleeping.

19. **Ventilation.** The Charter School shall do at least one of the following:

- a. Maximize the supply of outside air to the extent feasible, except when the Air Quality Index is greater than 100 for any pollutant or when opening windows would otherwise be hazardous.
- b. Use mechanical air filtering using a filter at least up to MERV-13 value
- c. Use HEPA filtration units where ventilation is inadequate to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

#### **IV. COVID-19 Best Practices and Recommendations**

1. **Vaccination.** The Charter School encourages students and staff to receive all recommended COVID-19 vaccinations.
2. **Masks After Exposure.** Students with known or suspected exposure to COVID-19 should wear masks indoors when around others for ten days from their last exposure.
3. **Masks After Return from Exposure.** Students returning from isolation before the tenth day from symptom onset (or the tenth day from testing positive, if asymptomatic) should wear a mask indoors when around others until the tenth day from symptom onset (or until the tenth day from their positive teste if asymptomatic).
4. **Masks in Nurse's Offices.** Wearing masks is strongly recommended in health-associated facilities like nurse's offices, COVID-19 testing areas, isolation areas, etc.
5. **Hygiene Practices.** It is strongly recommended that all individuals maintain appropriate hand cleanliness, as frequent hand washing can help prevent the spread of communicable diseases. The Charter School will consider providing hand sanitizer at appropriate locations, teaching and reinforcing proper handwashing technique, teaching and reinforcing proper cough and sneeze etiquette, and discouraging the sharing of personal items such as cups, food, utensils, water bottles, etc.

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