



## Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan (RIPICS)

As we continue to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic, Great Hearts Texas maintains its commitment to quality classical education, with the health and safety of our students and staff as a top priority. The following Safe Return Policy promotes the health and safety of our students and staff as we fully return to in-person instruction.

### *Health and Safety of Students and Staff*

- Parents will be reminded to continue to screen their child for symptoms of COVID-19 and other contagious illnesses and not send students to school when they are exhibiting symptoms (please see our [Home Screening](#) criteria). Faculty and students should follow Great Hearts Texas' [Attendance Guidelines](#) for illness. Parents should screen their students each day for symptoms of contagious illness, including COVID-19.
- Students and staff members who test positive for Covid-19 must remain off campus until specific readmission criteria set by the Texas Department of State Health Services are met (please see readmission criteria [here](#)).

### *Social Distancing*

- In accordance with TEA guidelines, Great Hearts Texas will no longer require social distancing as a result of classrooms, multi-purpose rooms, and lunch rooms returning to full capacity. However, individual campuses are providing distanced dining options (as they are capable according to their specific facilities). Desk shields have been removed due to lack of evidence for their effectiveness in reducing transmission.

### *Test-confirmed Positive COVID-19:*

- In the instance of a test-confirmed positive case that has been on campus during infectious period, grades/sections of the positive individual will be notified.
- Great Hearts Texas will conduct contact tracing to the extent possible following [CDC Guidelines](#) and will notify parents if their student is identified as a close contact of a Covid-19 positive individual. While quarantining of *campus close contacts* will be optional, quarantining of unvaccinated *household close contacts* is required regardless of vaccination status. A household close contact may return to campus at the same time as the infected individual, though we recommend testing of household close contacts prior to their return to campus.
- Great Hearts Texas retains the authority to quarantine sections, grade levels, or schools to reduce known spread.
- Positive cases of COVID-19 must continue to be reported to the school nurse who will report to the county health department as required by law. Parents may email [covid@greatheartstx.org](mailto:covid@greatheartstx.org) to report a positive case.

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- Per current TEA guidelines, test-confirmed positive cases of any staff, visitor or student must be submitted to Texas Department of State Health Services via this [online form](#). This should be done each week for any identified cases and is submitted by the district nurse.

## *Face Masks:*

- In accordance with Governor Abbot's Executive Order [GA-36](#), masks are optional for everyone on campus.
- Any student or staff member who wishes to wear a mask will be supported in doing so. Masks must continue to comply with our current uniform policy.

## *Maintaining a healthy environment:*

- Current air filtration systems put in place at the beginning of 20-21 school year will continue, which [have been shown](#) to have a positive impact on student attendance. These are MERV-13 filters which are considered the highest-grade filter outside a hospital and can filter viruses.
- Each classroom and restroom will be disinfected at the end of each school day using a disinfectant that is COVID-19-approved by the EPA.
- All high touch areas will be disinfected at the end of each school day. High-touch areas may include but are not limited to backs and arms of chairs, desk tops, door handles, stair rails.
- The cafeteria will be disinfected between lunch periods.
- Cleaning supplies are available in each classroom and common area to periodically clean high-touch areas in classrooms during the school day in an effort to maximize room to room cleanliness.
- Efforts to ensure proper handwashing and respiratory hygiene will continue, providing both students and staff instruction at the beginning of the school year as well as providing hand washing opportunities and frequent use of hand sanitizer.

## *Accommodations for children with special needs:*

- Students who have disabilities will receive the needed accommodations to ensure their safety while they are on campus or attending any campus-related events.
- Parents of students with special health needs, especially those who are immunocompromised, should contact their campus nurse or email our district nurse at [Kristen.vonberg@greatheartstx.org](mailto:Kristen.vonberg@greatheartstx.org).

## *Extra-curricular events:*

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- In-person assemblies and gatherings will continue as the campus positivity rate remains below 2% for the student body.

## *Testing:*

- Rapid COVID-19 testing is available free of charge to any student or staff with COVID-like symptoms (while available) at the discretion of the campus RN. Consent for testing is required and a consent form can be found [here](#). Please email [covid@greatheartstx.org](mailto:covid@greatheartstx.org) if you would like to have your student tested.

## *Campus visitors:*

- All visitors to campus should [self-screen](#) for COVID-19 prior to entering facilities. Anyone with symptoms or any unvaccinated individual with recent exposure to infected person should not enter. Campus visitors will be allowed with no other restrictions if the student positivity rate remains below 2%.

## *Vaccines:*

- Per [Gov. Abbott's order](#), Great Hearts cannot require students or staff to get vaccinated. At this time, the State of Texas has not added the COVID-19 vaccination to the required immunization list for students. Further, Great Hearts cannot require students or staff to report vaccination status.
- COVID-19 vaccines are widely available and are approved for anyone 12 and older. You can find a vaccine by going to [www.vaccines.gov](http://www.vaccines.gov).

## *Coordination with state and local health officials:*

Great Hearts will remain in communication with local health and state officials concerning and changes or safety updates pertaining to COVID-19. These changes will be updated (when appropriate) and included in updates to Great Hearts stakeholders.

These guidelines are subject to change in the event that local COVID-19 cases increase, or at the direction of state and local authorities. Modifications to these guidelines may be made at the discretion of individual campus covid response teams as conditions warrant.

Great Hearts' health services are one facet of the continuity of services to students that we provide, which also includes our commitment to meeting the academic, social, emotional, mental health, and nutritional needs of our scholars.

For questions or comments, please contact [info@greatheartstx.org](mailto:info@greatheartstx.org).

COVID-19 Point of Contact:  
Kristen VonBerg, BSN, RN



GHTX District Nurse

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