



MINNESOTA STATE ACADEMIES FOR THE DEAF AND THE BLIND

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Minnesota State Academies Health and Safety Plan for Students, Staff, and Visitors

*Updated as of July 1, 2022.

Since this plan has changed significantly, please review the entire document as all sections have been changed, deleted, and/or updated. Thank you.

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Guiding Principles

The Minnesota State Academies (MSA) are committed to providing safe and healthy campuses for our students, families, community, and employees. Decisions that were previously mandated by different government agencies are now made by MSA administrators, using best practices, guidance, and information available to us.

Our health/safety plan will be reviewed periodically, and updates will continue to be implemented throughout the 2022-2023 school year in accordance with recommendations and/or guidelines from the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and as circumstances change on our campuses. While there are still some unknowns about the future

MSA empowers every student to achieve, care, and thrive in an ever-changing world.

of COVID-19 and its impact in Minnesota, our goal is to mitigate the potential for transmission of COVID-19 in our school and community and maintain the safety and health of everyone on our campuses.

We have tried to address different concerns that parents/families and employees have shared with us through this plan. In it, you will find answers to the questions that have been asked, including what safety protocols are required around the campus. Changes and updates to this plan will be communicated with students, parents, family members, and employees promptly.

At MSA, we have unique needs on our campus. Examples of our unique needs include:

- **We serve students from all over the state.**
- **About 40% of our students live on campus.**
- **We have a high percentage of students with health and/or other challenges.**
- **We also serve a wide range of age groups (18 months through 21) on our campuses.**
- **Many of our staff fall within high-risk categories.**

Due to those factors, our health/safety plan may have additional details and limitations beyond the usual mitigation strategies in neighboring school districts. We hope that you understand our unique situation and thank you for your continued support.

Following these guidelines will require instruction, guidance, and support. We ask that you prepare your children for their return to school by:

- teaching them to follow MSA health and safety guidelines, including possible restrictions of their social interactions with others.
- helping them understand and practice social distancing and mask wearing, when required.
- helping them understand the importance of personal hygiene and handwashing.
- teaching and modeling proper coughing and sneezing practices.
- emphasizing the serious nature of this pandemic and respecting the concerns of others in the community.
- as appropriate, getting vaccinated/boosted and encouraging others to do the same.
- showing respect for those who may choose not to get vaccinated – there may be a variety of reasons for their decisions.

Thank you for all your questions, patience, and continued support.

Instructional Plans

The MSA Instructional Leadership Team will continue to monitor health data and other factors and will send out communication to staff/families if there are changes in our health/safety protocols. At this time, we anticipate that all our educational programs will be in-person on our campuses with minimal restrictions. Students who take classes at Faribault Public Schools will continue to take those classes, following the health/safety plan of both schools.

Based on CDC county by county contagion rates and recommendations, we will be adjusting the restrictions placed on classroom spaces and learning/extracurricular activities as appropriate.

We continue to encourage all staff and students to become vaccinated and boosted as soon as possible. Staying up to date on [routine vaccinations](#) is essential to prevent illness from many different infections. Vaccines reduce the risk of infection by working with the body's natural

defenses to help safely develop immunity to disease. For COVID-19, [staying up to date with COVID-19 vaccinations](#) is the leading public health strategy to prevent severe disease.

Registration

Please communicate with your campus' administrative assistant (Heidi Cole – 507-384-6700 for MSAB, or Donna Hanson – 507-384-6600 for MSAD) to ensure that all your forms have been completed prior to your student's return to campus. If you need to submit additional forms, they can be mailed, faxed, or scanned/mailed to us. Please complete all registration forms, including health and medication forms so that we can make sure everything is compiled and ready to support your child while they are on campus.

Health Screening

It is vital that all of us (students, families, employees) cooperate in the process of health screening **DAILY** to protect yourselves and others. We have many students and some staff members who have additional health concerns and one of the ways we can minimize the risk of exposure to COVID-19 is to participate in daily health screening honestly and fully. We ask that families take this seriously and review the self-screening questions every day prior to sending your child(ren) to school. Employees will continue to complete and submit daily health screening forms prior to your arrival to campus.

All students and any family members who arrive on campus with their student must first complete self-screening for any symptoms of COVID-19. (Guidance is available on our MSAB/MSAD websites ([Link to checklist](#)). If your answers to the questions on the screening are all "NO", proceed to drop off your child at the school or at the bus stop. **If there are any "YES" answers to the screening questions, please do not come to campus – contact MSA Health Services or Health Services Director Kimberly Viskocil first before determining next steps.**

We recommend that everyone self-monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 and ask families to help teach your child(ren) how to do this. The presence of any unexplained symptoms, including cough or shortness of breath, should prompt the individual to go to Health Services.

- We will take steps to ensure the privacy of families and students as they participate in the screening process. All conversations with our Health Services are confidential, allowing information sharing only on a need-to-know basis within the processes identified to maintain health and safety.
- Upon arrival on campus or during the day, students who display symptoms of illness will be immediately referred to Health Services and our nurses will evaluate the students to determine if they can stay in school or must go home. **Parents are responsible to have a plan to immediately pick up their child at any time that they might become sick throughout the year, including a back-up plan in case of severe weather and/or parent illnesses/conflicts.**
- Students staying in our dorms will also be observed for symptoms by our residential educators every morning before leaving the dorms for breakfast. Students are encouraged to report symptoms and visit the health center for additional support as needed.
- In most cases, transportation companies will not be responsible for transporting students back home if the student displays a fever or additional symptoms. This underscores the importance of doing a health self-screening before sending students to school on district-provided transportation.

- We continue urge all families to practice healthy social distancing and other mitigation measures at home and/or activities in the community, especially during interactions in large crowds, closed indoor spaces, and so forth so that exposure is minimized on our campuses. We have students from all over Minnesota and cross-contagion is something that we want to avoid as much as possible.

Other Safety Precautions

- We have established and will continue enhanced sanitation measures including daily cleaning and disinfection of all classroom and residential spaces via an ionization process which involves spraying down each space with specially designed equipment which kills 99.9 percent of all viruses and bacteria. We have also installed specialized ionization systems to our HVAC system to provide an additional layer of sanitization to all our buildings.
- We have installed handwashing stations in entry areas of buildings where bathrooms are not easily accessed so that students and visitors can wash their hands. We will continue to encourage everyone to wash their hands frequently throughout the day.
- Our staff will follow an enhanced schedule for cleaning, with increased focus on high-touch areas such as doorknobs, rails, and other items which are touched often by our students and staff. This will include frequent cleaning and sanitization of our bathroom facilities. For more information on our cleaning procedures and daily cleaning checklist, visit our website: [link to cleaning procedures](#)

Contagion Rates and Restrictions on our Campuses

Going forward, we will utilize the CDC's [county-level contagion rate](#) to determine appropriate steps to take on our campuses. CDC issues updates periodically throughout the year, assigning each county a status of low, medium, or high. When Rice County is in low or medium contagion rate status, our restrictions will be more flexible than when we are in a high contagion rate status. We will communicate status changes to students, parents/families, staff, and visitors promptly.

Response to COVID-19 Exposure

- We use the word quarantine to describe the step that happens when a person has a suspected exposure but has not tested positive or shown symptoms. We use the word isolation for when a person has tested positive or has shown symptoms and is awaiting testing.
- Any time an individual has tested positive for COVID-19, they will be required to isolate for at least 5 days. They may return to work/school when they are symptom-free for at least 24 hours (beyond the initial 5-day isolation). When they return to work/school, they must continue to wear masks on our campuses until 10 days have passed since their initial positive test or onset of symptoms.
- When an individual is identified as a close contact (without symptoms), we will offer an “test to stay” option. Individuals who are willing to participate in this option will be required to test for COVID-19 on the 2nd and 5th days. If test results are negative, they can continue to work or attend classes. If their test results are positive, then they will follow isolation rules as listed above. If an individual is not willing to participate in testing, they will be required to quarantine for the full 10-day period.
- When Rice County is in “low” or “medium” status, we will not conduct contact tracing. We will communicate with staff and families when we have a positive test on one of our campuses, indicating where the individual worked or attended classes. When Rice

County is in “high” status, we will resume contact tracing and will be in touch with students, their parents, and employees who may have been exposed.

- All students will be observed during the day for any symptoms and as necessary, referred to our health services for follow-up. All conversations with our Health Services are confidential, allowing information sharing only on a need-to-know basis within the processes identified to maintain health and safety. **Students who display symptoms of illness, including COVID-19 symptoms, will be isolated and parents will be contacted to come and pick up their child.**
- Students who develop a fever or become ill with COVID-19 symptoms at school will be isolated immediately, required to wear a facial covering, and be evaluated by Health Services. Parents will be contacted immediately and asked to pick up their child.
- We will continue to seek out resources to provide at-home COVID-19 tests, but those resources are dwindling. Contact your local pharmacy or physician for more testing options if needed.
- MSA will notify local/state health officials according to MDH guidelines for an identified case of COVID-19 while maintaining confidentiality consistent with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and other applicable federal and state privacy laws.

Arriving on Campus

- Prior to travel to campus, if the student or any family member have any “YES” responses to the MSA health screening protocol, we ask that the family and the student do not come to campus and begin the self-quarantine/isolation process as appropriate after consulting with our health services department.
- We continue to ask that family members limit the number of people who travel to MSA, preferably limiting it to essential people who need to accompany the student and transport their belongings. Social distancing should be followed as much as possible.
- Our Residential Educators and Student Life Program Coordinators will be on site to support students arriving in our dorms.
- Parents and families are allowed to visit campus with prior authorization from our campus directors. Parents and families must complete their self-screening protocol and be symptom free to visit our campus. MSA will keep records of all visitors in case contact tracing is necessary.

Facial Coverings

- **When Rice County is in sustained high status or if MSA is facing a school outbreak of COVID-19**, facial coverings [may](#) be required inside all campus academic buildings, dorms (except when inside the student’s assigned dorm room), and athletic buildings. MSA administration will communicate if this requirement needs to be implemented.
- When masks are required, if a physical distance of more than six (6) feet can be maintained, it is permissible to temporarily remove the mask if it hinders communication. The distance increases to twelve feet for activities that involve more forceful breathing, such as music or P.E. Students who cannot wear masks for health reasons may wear shields only (with approval from Kimberly Viskocil, MSA Health Services Director). For students who cannot wear anything, please reach out to your campus director or student life director for additional support.
- Wearing a [well-fitting mask](#) consistently and correctly reduces the [risk of spreading the virus](#) that causes COVID-19. Universal indoor mask use is recommended at a high COVID-19 Community Level.

- The following facial coverings are acceptable:
 - A paper or disposable mask, a cloth face mask, or a N95/KN95 mask that fits snugly against the sides of the face; covers the nose and mouth completely; is secured over the nose and mouth; and allows for breathing without restriction.
 - Masks must be made with proper materials and sufficiently designed to prevent the spread of droplets. The fabric used must not be too thin or porous – (i.e., bandannas, gaiters, or similar face coverings would not be acceptable.)
 - Medical-grade masks and respirators are acceptable.
 - Masks that incorporate a valve designed for easy exhaling, mesh masks, or face coverings with openings, holes, visible gaps in the design material, or vents are **NOT** sufficient face coverings because they allow droplets to be released.
 - Facial coverings may be reusable cloth or disposable masks. Please make sure that your student has masks available in case they are required during the school week. Additional back-up masks will be available for students as needed if masks become dirty or damaged. If you are having difficulty obtaining masks, please let your campus director know.
- Reusable cloth facial coverings must be washed daily. Disposable masks should be discarded at the end of the day.
- Decoration, patterns, or markings on any facial covering needs to be respectful of other members of our community and appropriate for a school setting. Masks must comply with dress code requirements as per MSA policy. Staff/students are encouraged to use solid-color masks - bold patterns or images/wording can be distracting.
- When required (when Rice County is in “high” status”), visitors must bring their own masks and complete a visitor self-screening at the main entrance of buildings. Visitors who do not have masks will not be allowed in our buildings and will be asked to leave.
- Individuals who have documented disabilities or medical issues which prevent them from using masks may contact our human resources department (employees) or the campus director (students and family members) to discuss accommodations.

Hygiene and Hand Washing

- MSA will provide adequate supplies to support healthy hygiene behaviors (including soap, hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol for safe use by employees and students, paper towels, tissues, and signs reinforcing proper handwashing techniques).
- MSA will encourage and reinforce handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and/or the safe use of hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol when handwashing is not readily available. Signage will be posted to remind students to wash their hands regularly.
- Students and employees will be educated on how to cough and sneeze into their elbows, or to cover with a tissue. Used tissues should be thrown in the trash and hands washed immediately using proper hand hygiene techniques.
- MSA will frequently check and refill soap and hand sanitizers. Each classroom will have cleaning supplies/microfiber towels to wipe down and sanitize surfaces and equipment between student use.
- Students are encouraged to limit sharing of personal items and supplies such as writing utensils. Teachers and staff will establish routines to ensure that student supplies and equipment are kept separately for each individual and/or cleaned between uses. (i.e., Brailers that are shared among classes will be cleaned between uses.)

Spacing, Movement, and Access

- When Rice County is in low/medium status, social distancing is still strongly recommended at all times. Spacing of seats and desks are encouraged to be as far apart as possible in classrooms.
- When Rice County is in high status, the following restrictions will be considered.
 - Seats and desks will be spaced a minimum of three feet apart, up to six feet apart in classrooms whenever possible.
 - In classrooms where large tables are utilized, students will be spaced as far apart as feasible.
 - Teachers will maintain six feet of spacing between themselves and students as much as possible. For staff members who work with students who require physical contact or close proximity (i.e., students with physical needs, early childhood students, etc.), they will be encouraged to wear masks when working closely with students.
 - If a classroom has windows that can open, they will be open as much as possible, weather permitting.
 - Use of the pool on the MSAB campus will be monitored carefully to ensure safety of students. It is possible that the use of the pool may be restricted or paused.
 - Travel between campuses may be limited. (For example, allowing only students who require specialized services such as Braille or American Sign Language that cannot be provided remotely to be transported between campuses). As an alternative, staff members may travel to the other campus to provide services instead of transporting students
- Floor stickers, distancing signs, and other reminders will be posted throughout the buildings on both campuses to assist students and staff in remembering health and safety expectations. Our mass communication systems will be utilized to remind and support our students in following safety procedures.

Group Activities

- Close contact is defined as contact less than 6 feet apart for more than 15 minutes. Opportunities for exposure will be limited as much as possible, especially when students are around each other for 15 minutes or more by encouraging social distancing of at least six feet between students and proper hygiene practices.
- If contact tracing is implemented, we will track all contact during the previous 48 hours before being identified with COVID-19 symptoms so continuing to practice social distancing is encouraged.
- We will continue to monitor and may limit activities that bring together large groups of people and activities that do not allow for social distancing. (i.e., plays, concerts, guest presentations, assemblies, athletic events, field trips). MSA administrators will make decisions on a case-by-case basis and communicate those decisions with students, parents/families, and staff. Approved events will be accompanied with information about restrictions, safety measures, and livestreaming options.

Dorm Life

- As much as possible, students will not be assigned roommates or limited to two students per room. They will not be required to wear facial coverings within their dorm room but should continue practice social distancing whenever possible. Students should refrain from sharing personal items as much as possible
- Students are encouraged to practice safe social distancing in all shared areas of the dorms and anytime they are outside of their dorm room.

- All bathroom facilities and shared areas of dorms will be cleaned and sanitized on a regular basis. Students will be responsible for basic cleaning duties within their dorm rooms. Residential Educators will provide support and structure.

Athletic Facilities

Social distancing will be encouraged in all areas of the athletic facilities whenever possible. Students will receive guidance use of restrooms, locker rooms, and showers to minimize the risk of contagion as much as possible.

Cafeterias

- Mealtimes will be staggered to reduce congestion in the cafeterias.
- Meals will either be served by staff or provided in “grab and go” options. Students will not serve themselves from buffets.
- Social distancing markers will be placed on the floor to keep students and employees six feet apart while waiting for their food in the cafeteria.
- All students and employees are encouraged to wash or sanitize their hands prior to entering the cafeteria.
- Servers and kitchen employees will be serving behind a barrier protection, wearing gloves and facial coverings.
- The cafeteria tables and chairs will be arranged to allow for proper social distancing. Kitchen staff will be sanitizing tables and chairs after each meal.
- Our dish return and garbage area will be managed so congestion is minimized.

Transportation

- All off-campus travel will be monitored and managed by the campus director/student life director. (i.e., field trips; classes, work study experiences, extracurricular activities). Students and staff must follow all guidelines as outlined in this document. Trips to places that do not have clear health/safety guidelines and/or are crowded may not be allowed. (i.e., shopping malls, indoor activity arenas, and so forth).
- Off-campus/on-campus work study experiences will be carefully designed and monitored for health/safety. All work study experiences must be authorized by the campus director.
- When transportation is provided by MSA (i.e., transportation between campuses), seats will be sanitized between trips, and student seating will be spaced out on all vehicles according to current guidelines at the time of the travel.

Athletics and After School Programs

- Team sports will continue in the fall. Outdoor activities will continue to be encouraged as much as possible. Any additional MSHSL guidelines will be incorporated into our plans.
- Visiting teams must complete a health self-screening before their arrival and will be housed separately from MSA students. Social activities with visiting teams will be carefully designed and monitored to reduce the risk of contagion
- After school activities and elementary sports will also continue in the fall_– Activities will follow the same mitigation measures as outlined in this document.
- Students and staff will be reminded use proper hand washing techniques before and after every practice, event, or other gathering. Every participant should confirm that they are healthy and without any symptoms prior to any event.
- If players feel ill or the coaches/staff are concerned about their well-being, the player will leave the practice and the coaches/staff will contact Health Services for support.
- Players will be instructed to contact the coach if at any time during or after the session, they develop any COVID-19 related symptoms. The coaching staff will contact Health

Services for support. **We ask that parents and guardians stress the importance of reporting symptoms with their children who participate in athletics or after school programs at MSA.**

- For hydration breaks, players will use their own bottle and will sanitize their hands after breaks. Hand sanitizer will be available at the practice site.
- Each sport/activity will have an approved process for disinfecting all equipment. Shared equipment in the weight room will be sanitized between sessions and students will be asked to wipe down shared equipment between uses. Conditioning sessions in the weight room will be arranged to allow for proper social distancing.

Games and Competitions

- Game competitions will be held in accordance with the guidelines at the time of the event. We will utilize MSHSL and MDE guidance and communicate any changes with our student-athletes and their families.
- When Rice County is in high status, attendance at games may be limited and livestreaming will be provided, as necessary. Visitors must complete a health screening before entering the building to watch games.
- Participants will not share water bottles or personal equipment.

Travel

- If there is travel for games/competitions, social distancing will be encouraged during travel as much as possible. Student seating will be spaced out on all vehicles in accordance with current guidelines.
- For out of state travel, we will abide by regulations of the hosting school or organization and testing/self-screening for symptoms prior to the travel may be required.
- Any teams traveling out of state/overnight will continue to follow all the same guidelines we have on campus plus additional travel guidelines that the players will receive prior to departing.