



2021-2022 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)
Pandemic Recovery and Safety Plan



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2021-22 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic Recovery & Safety Plan

Intended audience of this document: TLC community members including; all employees, students, families, caregivers, clients, patients, local educational agencies, stakeholders and community partners. This plan is also to be shared with the licensing and contracting state agencies.

Executive Summary

This document has been created in consideration with guidelines developed by the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the Framingham Board of Health (BOH), the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) guidance, the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC), the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), the Massachusetts Association of Approved Private Schools (maaps) and Cushman and Wakefield (C&W). TLC will follow all governmental requirements.

The TLC Pandemic Recovery and Safety Plan is founded upon consideration of five interlocking components: 1) risks to public & organization constituents' health, 2) schools'/programs importance to family support and communication access, 3) impacts on students' & families' learning and thriving, 4) safeguarding readiness, and 5) individual responsibility.

Our 2021-2022 document picks up where our 2020-2021 reopening plan left off - in a continued environment of unprecedented challenges, including mitigating the risk of the virus, staffing shortages, and social, emotional and mental burnout from continued pandemic adjustments. It also, however, begins in a more optimistic and collaborative place, including access to vaccinations, and school response teams whose aim is to provide equitable access to academic learning and support.

Our plan outlines the ongoing steps TLC is taking to continue to address COVID-19, including the Delta variant, and highlights the personal responsibility of all stakeholders, as advised by the [CDC](#). By releasing this expectation, TLC is communicating our plans moving forward, highlighting workplace and school protocols in place to protect safety, and establish a level of comfort for all of our employees, students, families and clients.

This Pandemic Recovery and Safety Plan describes our approach to a successful and supportive return of all students and staff to Marie Philip and Walden School, as well as the continued success of our other community programs. The TLC Safety Committee identified **equity and inclusion, physical and emotional safety, academic excellence, and mental health** as top priorities for refining a flexible system that will be able to quickly assess and respond to students' needs.

Our ultimate priority for the academic programs for the 2021-22 school year is to provide an uninterrupted in-person learning experience for all students. This means that we will continue to closely monitor all health and safety guidelines from local and national organizations. It also means that we will track and share local and state statistics relative to the prevalence of COVID-19 and vaccination rates in our community. This will allow us to revise our protocols as necessary in order to provide the safest environment for all.

The diversity of programs and services provided by TLC, both on campus and in the community, necessitates that this document is serving as a general guideline, and applies to all TLC programs.





Letter from Leadership

Dear TLC Community, Parents, Caregivers, Students, Staff:

Our 2021-2022 Pandemic Recovery and Safety Plan describes our approach to a successful, safe and supportive return of all students to The Learning Center for the Deaf. Given the continuously changing information, this document has been developed based on the information as of Fall 2021. As additional information is modified and becomes available, this document will be revised and a summary of changes highlighted on our [COVID-19 webpage](#).

First and foremost, our actions are guided by our mission: **To ensure that all deaf and hard of hearing children and adults thrive by having the knowledge, opportunity and power to design the future of their choice.**

We acknowledge that the past 19+ months have been extremely challenging for members of the TLC Community. We commit to ensuring that our pandemic recovery will neither negate the trauma and impact of the pandemic, nor make assumptions about the unique experiences of individual students and families.

The only way the TLC Community has been able to respond to the complex challenges that we originally faced when the COVID-19 pandemic first appeared was through the dedication and vigilance of so many staff, faculty and leaders. What we thought would be a short-term issue has become a long-term challenge. We continue to be grateful for the tireless work of so many. Thank you to all those who continue to weather the storm, respond to community questions and emerging issues, and problem-solve whatever challenges we face, including our dedicated Focus Area planning members and hard-working administrators, principals, educational, and community program leaders.

Last, but not least, we continue to be grateful to the students, staff, parents, and caregivers for your ongoing partnership — We know the challenges and anxieties have been relentless. Thank you for your patience and for your continued faith in us. We learned from our shared experiences in 2020, and from the gradual reopening last spring, and your input has helped to inform this plan.

It will not be easy, and it will be different, but we are confident that TLC will continue to thrive and be stronger than ever.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah Glenn-Smith".

Dr. Sarah Glenn-Smith

Chief Executive Officer

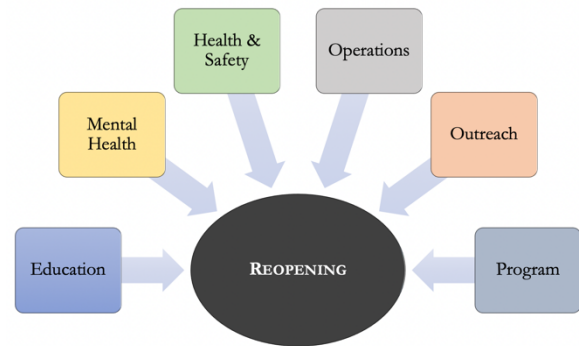
The Learning Center for the Deaf



Background and Plan Approach

Coronavirus (COVID-19) is a novel coronavirus that has not been previously identified. COVID-19 is a highly contagious illness that is caused by a virus that can spread from person to person. Symptoms can range from mild (or no symptoms) to severe illness. For more information please see the [CDC](https://www.cdc.gov/) main website.

The Plan was developed by the TLC Reopening Response Team, composed of Team Captains, Co-Captain(s) and a minimum of 5 Contributing Members, assigned to each Focus Area. Adhering to best practice safety guidelines available at the time, we will continue to vigilantly focus on what we can control, trust in the advice of experts, partner with all local, state and national partners and governing bodies, and continue to adapt our plan as guidance and available data evolves.



The Importance of Maintaining Safety Policies

With adherence to a comprehensive set of critical health and safety requirements, we have brought our students, staff, and families safely back to school.

Most of us are now quite familiar with the critical health and safety practices that reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19, including the Delta variant.. These include rigorous hygiene and handwashing, use of masks/face coverings, physical distancing, reducing interaction between groups, staying home when sick, protecting those most vulnerable to the disease, and expanding testing and tracing capabilities, among others.

However, what can often get lost in long lists of practices is that it is not one mitigation strategy, but a *combination* of all these strategies taken together that will substantially reduce the risk of transmission. In other words, continuing to be persistent with the established culture of health and safety in our schools and programs that focuses on regularly enforcing these important practices is more important than any one measure.

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Parent/Caregiver Communication

Parent communication continues to be an integral part of our educational programs, and we value our connection with families. The following outlines the different ways to communicate with our school departments:

ECC

- ECCDepartment@tlcdeaf.org
- VP: 508-283-1026

Elementary

- elementarydept@tlcdeaf.org
- VP: 774-244-3122

Secondary

- secondary@tlcdeaf.org
- VP: 774-999-0926

Walden School

- walden@tlcdeaf.org
- 508-626-8581 (voice)
- 508-318-0260 (VP-Patricia Bowen)
- 774-406-3672 (VP-Karen Enge)

Nursing Department

- nurses@tlcdeaf.org
- (508) 879-5110 x520 from 7:30 AM - 8:30 PM Monday through Friday
- (508) 879-5423 After Hours and Weekends

The TLC Superintendent and/or principals send weekly email communications to families. These communications are presented in ASL, written English, and translated into Portuguese, Spanish, and French. Key materials shared with families, including forms, are also translated.

All students are assigned following teachers (ECC, Elementary, Secondary and Walden School). Each following teacher maintains regular communication with families to ensure that our students have the necessary resources and support. In addition to our teachers, we have counselors responsible for each department who are also available to support our students and families.

Our communications protocols also include a text notification system for families/caregivers in the event of an emergency or closure.

Please see links [here](#) for the most updated Marie Philip School and Walden School Academic Calendars.

Student Support in School

TLC recognizes the importance of mental health and social emotional support, including through our school counselors and social workers. School faculty and staff will make referrals to Walden Community Services or other appropriate external agencies as needed.

Our residential students will continue to receive instruction in independent living skills and academic and language support from residential counselors after school hours.





In light of recent events, and a national movement to fight for racial justice, it is even more critical that our students are provided additional learning opportunities through which we can engage in [meaningful discussions](#) on anti-racism, provide mental health support, and help to prepare our young people to bring about the changes our world desperately needs.

Schools are reporting increased rates of chronic stress, anxiety, and depression among students due to the pandemic, social isolation, a weakened economy, and the racial trauma that many students have experienced. TLC recognizes the need to proactively identify students' needs and address them with the [appropriate support](#). As part of TLC's Mental Health Support Plan that will be released this year, we have identified the Student Response Team and students' teachers as the first lines of support. Please reach out to the Student Response Team, made up of school psychologists, clinicians, and counselors and/or your child's teacher if you would like to check-in about or discuss your child's emotional and social well-being to ensure we, together, continue to provide multi-faceted support.

Student Support Outside of School

If school staff notice a student is struggling in the classroom and needs more support, a referral can be made to Walden Community Services.

The Walden Community Services program at TLC provides culturally and linguistically appropriate treatment and family stabilization for families with a deaf and/or hard of hearing family member. Our strength-based, individualized, and evidence-based approach supports youth and families through in-home therapy, intensive care coordination (Wraparound), therapeutic mentoring services, and family support & stabilization. For more information about these services, please visit [About Walden Community Services](#), or [Behavioral Health Online Referral](#) to request an evaluation and eligibility for services.

Students' Health and Safety

Contacting Our Nursing Department:

The school nurses at the Health Services Department can be reached at:

- (508) 879-5110 x520 from 7:30 AM - 8:30 PM Monday through Friday
- (508) 879-5423 After Hours and Weekends
- Fax: (508) 872-7191

Our student health and safety guidance is intended, first and foremost, to protect the health, safety and wellbeing of students, teachers, other school staff, their families, and communities. The unique and critical role that schools play makes them a priority for opening and remaining open, enabling students to receive both academic instruction and support, as well as critical services.

The on-going pandemic and the emergence of the Delta and Omicron variants require us to maintain many of the strategies put in place since 2020. To return to school fully in-person in Fall 2021 posed new challenges for schools, including continuing mitigation strategies, (e.g., social distancing, cleaning and disinfection, hand hygiene, and the continued use of cloth face coverings), addressing social, emotional, and mental health needs of students, addressing potential learning loss, and preparing for the probability of other variant cases within the broader school community.

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Attestation and COVID Symptoms

Families will continue to play an important role helping with our safety protocols. We have asked parents/caregivers again this school year to fill out and return a [One-Time Parent Attestation Form](#) before their child starts school.

The form requires the parent/caregiver attest that their child **has not, nor any household members have not**, exhibited any of the following symptoms:

- Temperature of [100.0 degrees](#) Fahrenheit or higher, felt feverish/warm or had chills, or shaking
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- New loss of taste or smell
- Gastrointestinal symptoms (diarrhea, nausea, vomiting)
- Fatigue
- Headache
- Nasal congestion or runny nose not due to other known causes, such as allergies
- New muscle aches or any other signs of illness

In addition, the attestation confirms that the child has not had close contact with a person known to be infected with COVID-19 or any other variant of COVID and that the parent/caregiver has not given the child medicine to lower a fever (*see General Attendance Guidelines below*.)

General Attendance Guidelines

- Student and staff health considerations will be followed before coming to school.
- Students and staff must stay home if they do not feel well. We have created a [Flow Chart](#) for parent guidance in determining whether to send their child to school. This is very important in preventing the spread of COVID-19.
- Students and staff with a temperature above 100.0 degrees should not attend school until they have been fever-free (under 100.0 degrees) for 24 hours days and without the use of fever-reducing medication, such as Tylenol, Motrin, Advil, or Ibuprofen.
- Students cannot return to campus until they have been cleared by the Nursing Department, and staff should check with HR prior to returning. A safe return to school is based on symptoms, duration of symptoms, test results, and clearance.

Student Exposure to COVID-19

All families must adhere to our [COVID Flow Chart](#), which addresses symptomatic, close contact and positive test situations. Students cannot return to school until the school nurse clears them to return to campus.

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Required Student Forms

TLC has required a series of electronic or printed forms for all new and returning students. These forms are available in English, Spanish, Portuguese and French, and will be translated into any other language as needed and as necessary to ensure acknowledgement of student health and emergency information, attestation to arriving on campus only if healthy, and free of any signs and symptoms of COVID or related illness. Back to school forms include:

- [Student Emergency Information](#) (MPS Day/Residential and Walden Commuter)





- [Student Emergency Information](#) (Walden Residential)

Additional resources for families can be found on our [website](#).

COVID-19 Safety and Standards Policy

This COVID-19 Safety Standards Policy (the “Policy”) is intended to provide instructions related to the steps TLC has taken to implement workplace safety standards and what is expected of employees, students and clients. These safety standards are categorized as follows:

- Social Distancing
- Face Coverings
- Hygiene Protocols
- Staffing and Operations
- Cleaning and Disinfecting

The Policy is subject to change or modifications at TLC’s discretion, consistent with or as may be required, by pandemic-related laws or guidance. The success of our return to work/school action plan relies on how well individuals follow social distancing and health and safety protocols.

If you have individual-specific questions or concerns regarding this Policy, please contact the COVID-Response Team Leader Sarah Glenn-Smith, CEO, or members of the COVID-19 Response Team, [here](#). **Please send general questions to the Health and Safety email group at healthandsafety@tlcdeaf.org.**

Social Distancing Plan

Employees, students and clients should follow social distancing best practices while at all TLC facilities, including but not limited to: workstations, cafeterias, gymnasium, common areas, break rooms, library, front office, and administrative spaces, and while conducting TLC work in the community. At this time, DESE and CDC are not requiring social distancing restrictions. While we recognize our diverse community, **we do not have a distance requirement, but to the greatest extent possible, both inside and outside the workplace, we will encourage 3-feet of distance.**

Face Coverings

All individuals, including employees, students, visitors, and vendors, are **required** to wear face coverings while inside any building at TLC or performing work on behalf of TLC, except where wearing a face covering is unsafe due to a medical condition, disability impact, other health or safety consideration, or a reason permissible under state guidance (while eating, or social distancing “mask breaks”). If any employee is unable to wear a face covering due to a medical condition or disability, they must contact the Human Resources Department to discuss a reasonable accommodation before returning to work on site or in the community. **Face coverings are required regardless of an individual’s vaccination status.**

Parents/caregivers are responsible for sending their child to school every day with a face covering or mask, and washing it or replacing it daily. Provisions will be made for students who forget to bring a face covering or mask to school. Mask breaks will be given throughout the day.

While the Commonwealth’s overall mask mandate was rescinded on May 29, 2021, several areas continued to [require face coverings](#) including public and private transportation systems, and in healthcare settings. Mask advisories remain in place, especially given the rise in Delta variant cases. CDC’s [updated guidance](#) does recommend that even fully vaccinated persons wear masks or face coverings when indoors if other risk factors are present. Additionally, DESE recently [extended the mask mandate](#) for all public and private schools to **January 15th, 2022**. TLC will continue to follow DESE’s mask mandates for school settings, and take



under advisement CDC and maaps mask advisories for healthcare settings, given that our Walden School is a 24/7 therapeutic and residential program.

The expectation at TLC is that all staff will wear face coverings appropriately per the CDC [guidelines](#), indoors at all times, (except when **alone** in private office space or **alone** in a classroom). It is also expected that all TLC staff will wash their individual masks daily. On the occasional instance that an employee forgets to bring their face covering to work, they may contact their supervisor or Lynn Power, Director of Health Services, at LPower@TLCDeaf.org to use a disposable face covering for the day. The Visitor Relations Office and Principals' offices have additional disposable masks.

Per guidance from the CDC [here](#), employees should wear face coverings properly by wearing the face covering over their nose and mouth and securing it under their chin so that it fits snugly against the sides of the face, while making sure they can still breath properly. Given CDC guidance, neck gaiters and bandanas are not considered an appropriate face covering. Face coverings should not be around the neck or up on the forehead. After touching the face covering, all should clean their hands as described in the Hygiene Protocols.

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Hygiene Protocols

According to the CDC, COVID-19 is believed to spread from person to person and the following measures are critical to prevent the spread of the virus:

Hand washing and sanitizing: All individuals will be required to wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds upon arrival to campus in the morning. All individuals should wash their hands frequently throughout the day after coming into contact with any shared surface throughout the workspace and building, before and after taking off face coverings, as well as before and after breaks and meals.

Cleaning and Disinfecting: TLC will make disinfectant and other cleaning products available to employees and will ensure high touch areas, such as shared equipment, doorknobs, etc. are cleaned and disinfected regularly.

Additionally, individuals must:

- Cover coughs and sneezes with your forearm and elbow; do not use your hands;
- Do not touch your face, eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands. If you do, wash your hands immediately.
- Avoid physical contact with others. Do not shake hands or even fist or elbow bump.
- Wash your mask daily.
- Avoid touching surfaces that may have been touched by others when possible.
- Individuals should only enter and exit through designated entryways, when building signs indicate doing so, and avoid gathering in doorways.
- Follow any posted signage regarding COVID-19 social distancing practices.
- Disinfect their workspace/classroom often.
- Wash hands often.
- Avoid unnecessary gatherings.



Please monitor your email and adhere to any additional guidance as it is provided.



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Enhanced Cleaning Protocols

The maintenance department, as part of their enhanced cleaning, will hire additional cleaners, have hired a cleaning supervisor, and will clean classrooms and offices more frequently. All open water fountains/coolers have been converted to individual bottle fill stations.

Student Protocol for Isolation and Health Screening

The Nursing Department and School Administration have designated three **isolation areas** (separate from the two nursing offices) to be used as medical isolation rooms should a student become sick while at school.

Students required to wait in the isolation area will be supervised at all times by a nurse or other designated staff wearing appropriate PPE. Others will not be allowed to enter the isolation area without appropriate PPE. Isolation areas will have a closed door and appropriate ventilation. Private or separate bathrooms will be made available for use by sick individuals only. Standard and droplet precautions will be followed by the school nurse. The isolation areas must not be reoccupied again until the areas have been deep cleaned after to prevent cross-contamination.

A school nurse will contact the parent/caregiver to pick up their child at a designated outside location on campus. Students will not be allowed to leave school on the bus or cab. A separate exit will be used from the regular exit for those students being discharged with a suspected infection.

If a student arrives at school not feeling well, a school nurse will assess the student and determine if the child may enter the classroom, or be isolated and sent home. If the nursing staff determines that a child is symptomatic and must go home before the end of the school day, the nurse will contact the parents/caregivers to pick up their child within 30 – 60 minutes of the call. A school nurse will follow-up with parents/caregivers for absences for more than 2 consecutive days or when the nurse deems appropriate.

The school nurse will determine when the child started to experience symptoms and factor in the two days prior to the onset when determining who had close contact with the child. Those in [close contact](#) with the student will be made aware of possible exposure. **All personal health information about your child will be kept confidential and released ONLY on a need-to-know basis.**

If any student has been exposed to COVID-19, regardless of symptoms, the child must not be permitted to return to the school program and if already present, must be sent home. If a child has been exposed to a sick or symptomatic person, protocols must be followed as outlined on the Student Response [Flow Chart](#).

Immunizations/Proof of Physical Exam

All parents/caregivers have been notified that it is mandatory that updated immunization records and proof of a recent (within one year) physical examination for their child must be submitted to the nursing department prior to their child starting school. The school nurse will review the current immunizations of every student before the start of school. Parents/caregivers have also been notified by the school nurse to submit their child's doctors' orders prior to the school year and written parental permission to administer medication.

For students requiring nebulizer treatments and tracheostomy care, a separate space has been identified and protocols have been developed in conjunction with the prescribing providers and the school nurse.

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Meals

Current guidance from CDC and DESE does not place a restriction on the numbers of students sitting at each table during meal times. When the weather is appropriate for eating outdoors, we will provide outdoor tables. The gymnasium will also be available when it turns colder outdoors. Meals from the cafeteria will be served in a grab-and-go box, with disposable, individually wrapped plasticware, and require no refrigeration. Students are allowed to bring food from home as long as it does not require refrigeration or the use of microwaves inside the cafeteria. The school nurses will provide a list of students with food allergies to each class. Students are not allowed to share food with anyone.

Field Trips

Field trips are allowed this year for Marie Philip School and Walden School students, with careful consideration and consultation with the nursing department. Field trips will require written family permission in advance and will follow all health and safety protocols, including face masks in public.

Library

The library will be available for classes as scheduled by staff. Students will be allowed to use and sign out books from the library.

Transportation

In most cases, student transportation to and from TLC is the responsibility of the sending school districts. Transportation companies must follow all current DESE and CDC guidelines. At present, every person in a vehicle must be masked at all times.

Athletics & After School Activities

At this time, our Athletics and After School Programs are operating at full capacity. Indoor athletic events (practices and games) require fully-masked athletes, officials, coaches and spectators. Events outdoors do not require masked participants. Students in our after-school programs must wear masks at all times when indoors. Athletics will follow [MIAA guidelines](#). Out-of-state games or field trips must be pre-approved by the Superintendent, in collaboration with the Director of Health Services.

Student Mental Health

TLC understands that living through the COVID-19 pandemic has increased stress and anxiety levels for everyone. The well-being of students and their families, some with additional family stress, lack of structure, social isolation, and language barriers leading to further language deprivation, has taken a toll. And for some, their environment included a loved one getting sick or dying, food insecurity, or perhaps witnessing situations that have significant impact on their mental health. Due to the significant stressors students likely experienced, consideration has been given to mental health needs as response plans were developed. TLC staff will work collaboratively between departments and with students and families to provide social-emotional support for students to thrive during the school year, including attending to students' basic psychological needs prior to diving into more traditional academic content.

In addition to the global pandemic, the public health crisis of racial injustice, the constant media and social media accounts of violence against members of the Black Community, and the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement, has a significant impact on TLC students, particularly students who identify as Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC). There are multiple layers of additional concerns that are being addressed currently and will [continue to be addressed](#) and supported throughout the next school year.





The interdisciplinary clinical team, composed of clinicians from Walden School, Marie Philip School, and Walden Community Services, has developed plans to address the mental health needs of students. We aim to provide an informal way for students to connect and lean on each other by having group dialogues about various experiences that have impacted them. Engaging and connecting with students and families is ongoing and systemic work that is foundational to schools delivering high-quality educational experiences in safe and supportive learning environments.

Marie Philip School Dorm

The MPS residential program is operating at full capacity this school year. Students are required to wear masks at all times indoors with the exception of when they are in their personal bedrooms. At present, following EOHHS guidelines, all residential students are tested for COVID-19 once a week.

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Staffing and Operations

The Learning Center for the Deaf provided three voluntary opportunities in 2021 for staff to receive a one- or two-dose COVID-19 vaccine (Pfizer, Moderna or J&J), as well as a COVID-19 booster vaccine, at no cost to the staff member.

If an employee is experiencing [symptoms](#) of any variant of COVID-19 they are required to **stay home** and contact Lisa Channen, LChannen@TLCDeaf.org.

Employees who have symptoms of acute respiratory illness should immediately seek medical attention and follow the guidance of a health care provider. Employees are **required** to self-identify and inform TLC if experiencing symptoms. This information will be kept strictly confidential and will be shared only on a need to know basis with critical people responsible for enacting safety measures. Employees who have been diagnosed with or are aware they've been directly exposed to COVID-19 **must** notify HR. This information will be kept confidential and will only be shared with those who need to know.

Employee Exposure and Confirmed Illness Protocols

Keeping employees safe is TLC's top priority. To accomplish this task, TLC has created various procedures for screening employees who return to work, dealing with COVID-19 exposure, responding to a confirmed case of COVID-19, and reporting transparency.

Employee Screening Protocols

TLC employees are expected to stay home from work if they are having any symptoms or if they are feeling sick. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission permits employers to measure employees' body temperatures before allowing them to enter the worksite. TLC reserves the right to implement a screening protocol for symptoms, such as temperature checks and/or signed certifications, at any point. Should employee screenings be necessary, they will be implemented on a nondiscriminatory basis, and all information collected will be treated as confidential medical information—specifically, the identity of workers exhibiting a fever or other COVID-19 symptoms. Information will only be shared with members of TLC management on a need to know basis.

Employees whose temperature is above 100.0 or are having symptoms of illness will be asked to leave work immediately.





Employees who begin to exhibit symptoms of COVID-19 while at work (on or off campus): Anyone having symptoms while at TLC must immediately isolate themselves from other people and inform Lisa Channen, HR Business Partner, their supervisor, and/or Administrator on Call, if possible. The employee will be asked to leave work immediately. Employees who are sent home must not use public transportation. TLC will work with you to arrange alternative transportation, such as from a family member, as needed. Employees who are on campus, and cannot drive, will wait in an assigned quarantine area while they wait for transportation. Employees sent home are asked to contact their healthcare provider immediately for medical advice and assistance. Employees who are sent home may be required to self-quarantine and are required to cooperate in any TLC contact tracing efforts.

Contact tracing is performed by the Town of Framingham Board of Health, as well as Lynn Power, Director of Health Services, and Lisa Channen, HR Business Partner, who have completed professional and certified courses. **Staff are reminded to keep all COVID-related information confidential.** Should a staff member be identified as a close contact, they will be notified by TLC Human Resources. If a close contact is identified outside the TLC organization, they will be contacted by the Framingham Board of Health. Staff should not self-identify as a close contact and should not assume they are a close contact unless they are contacted directly by a certified individual.

Additional Employment: If an employee has another job outside of TLC, they should notify HR of the nature of that position to help identify any issues with potential exposure to COVID-19 and to enable improved contact tracing efforts, if applicable.

Reporting Transparency Protocol

Report of COVID-19 Exposure or Positive COVID-19 Test: Any employee who tests positive for COVID-19 or believes they have been infected must notify TLC's Human Resources Department and will be instructed to follow the advice of a qualified medical professional and self-isolate. TLC will take appropriate measures to clean and disinfect the workplace and engage in contact tracing if necessary. If notified of an employee's positive COVID-19 test, TLC, in accordance with statewide standards of reopening, will notify the local Board of Health (BOH) and DESE, and will work with them to trace likely contacts in the workplace and advise workers, where appropriate, to isolate and self-quarantine. TLC will maintain the COVID-19 positive employee's confidentiality, to the extent practicable, and use the information strictly to [trace likely contacts](#) in the workplace, advise workers, and plan for cleaning.

Report of Close Contact with COVID-19: If an employee has come in [close contact](#) with someone who has a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19, they must notify TLC and may be asked to seek further medical attention and/or advice before being permitted to return to work. **Please note, per the CDC, that individuals who have had COVID-19 in the last 90 days (from day of symptom onset or day of first positive test if asymptomatic), AND individuals who have received either two doses of the Moderna or Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines or a single dose of the Janssen (J&J) COVID-19 vaccine, at least 14 days ago, and are asymptomatic, are not required to quarantine following an exposure.** If you are not fully vaccinated or you are having symptoms, you may not return to work until you get a negative test result, are fever free for 24 hours without fever reducing medication, and have improved symptoms.

When self-isolating, employees should:

- Stay away from other people in their home as much as possible, staying in a separate room and using a separate bathroom if available.
- Not allow visitors.
- Wear a face mask if they have to be around people.
- Avoid sharing household items, including drinking cups, eating utensils, towels and bedding.
- Clean high-touch surfaces daily.





- Continue monitoring their symptoms, calling their health care provider if their condition worsens.
- Maintain contact with HR to update on return to work.

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Return to Work Considerations

Notably, employees who are symptomatic or who have tested positive should not return to work until the conditions outlined in the table below are met and they have contacted HR to begin a re-entry plan:

Any TLC employee who experiences COVID-19 symptoms or has tested positive for COVID-19 must notify HR as soon as possible. The employee will be asked to assist with contact tracing. This information will be tracked separately from personnel records, and names will not be released. Depending on the circumstances, TLC will notify impacted employees if there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the workplace. The Learning Center for the Deaf may elect to close the office for an interim period of time following a confirmed case to allow for cleaning and natural deactivation of the virus.

Individuals Particularly Vulnerable to COVID-19: Employees may review the CDC's guidance [here](#) to determine whether they may be considered vulnerable to COVID-19. Employees, in collaboration with their healthcare providers, should use their best judgment to determine whether they may be particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 and if determined to be, should contact Lisa Channen, HR Business Partner to discuss a reasonable accommodation, where applicable. Human Resources will assess the ability to work from home, to the extent practicable and based on consultation with their supervisor and the needs of the programs.

Employee Mental Health Considerations

TLC understands that living through the COVID-19 pandemic has increased stress and anxiety levels for all of us, and that a return to work will increase stress for many. We take seriously the well-being of each staff person and how they are being impacted by their work, their home life, and COVID-19. We want to prioritize the mental health of our employees during these uncertain times. As such, we have made every effort to provide a safe return to work. If you need additional support, please reach out to your supervisor, a trusted colleague, the Human Resources Department or consider reaching out for help to those in your community or mental health network to help manage stress. A list of resources for employees (internal access only) can be found here: [Mental Health Resources by HR Department](#).

Employees with concerns regarding their mental health should request additional resources from HR. TLC has an Employee Assistance Program and [many other resources](#) that may be helpful. In addition, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health has provided a [website](#) for Maintaining Emotional Health and Well-Being During the COVID-19 Outbreak, which provides resources and tips.

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Additional Employee Support Recommendations

Self-Care: Programs will create opportunities for self-care within their departments. Supervisors should:

- Check-in frequently with employees;
- Create a schedule that allows for breaks (mask breaks and mental health breaks);
- Recognize that self-care differs from one person to another;
- Participate in training offered by the clinical team to increase awareness on how to support staff's mental health needs.





Addressing Burn-Out: Burn-out continues to be a significant effect of COVID-19, as employees are fulfilling their job expectations while balancing home life. People are feeling more overwhelmed and less supported. Coupled with staffing shortages, staff are facing longer working hours and increased demand for job tasks and productivity.

It is essential that the social and emotional needs of staff, educators, counselors, support teams are part of the conversation, especially since educators are often the individuals most likely to provide initial support to students. Our priority is to continue to develop initiatives to create supportive teacher-student relationships, as well as safe spaces for our staff to engage and reflect on the impacts of the pandemic. Through professional development opportunities, shared resource teams, virtual workshops and inclusive conversations, we hope to provide additional space to support our staff's social-emotional needs.

Leave Policy: An employee who must stay home from work due to COVID-19 who has prior approval to work remotely may do so. If an employee is not well enough to work remotely, they may request Emergency Paid Sick Leave or use their PTO/sick/vacation as applicable. Employees who have questions about their leave options should contact the Human Resources Department.

See Something Say Something: TLC encourages you to let your supervisor and/or HR know if you see something that concerns you in the workplace. For example: if you are concerned that any individual, including a student, may be showing symptoms of COVID-19, or is not maintaining social distance, you are encouraged to speak to your supervisor, or the Human Resources Department. There will be no retaliation against you for speaking to anyone at TLC about your health, including your potential exposure to COVID-19, or about any other health or safety concerns you may have. If you feel your concerns are not being acknowledged through reporting internally at TLC, the Commonwealth of MA has information on their website to file a report of [non-compliance](#).

Training: TLC has provided trainings to employees on proper social distancing and hygiene protocols in the workplace as well as measures employees should take to reduce disease transmission, including:

- The proper use of face coverings;
- Self-screening at home, including temperature or symptom checks;
- The importance of not coming to work if ill;
- When to seek medical attention if symptoms become severe;
- Which underlying health conditions may make individuals more susceptible to contracting and suffering from a severe case of the virus and;
- Safe and effective use of protective equipment.

The following protocols have been put in place:

Visitor Policy: TLC will allow for limited visitors on campus, including potential referring families. LEAs and other educational consultants who work with students and staff will also be allowed to visit campus in-person. All our visitors are asked to self-assess for symptoms prior to arriving on campus and wear a mask at all times when indoors.

Postings: TLC has developed a COVID-19 Control Plan outlining how its workplace will prevent/slow the spread of COVID-19, and the required Commonwealth of MA attestation forms are posted in the following locations: 848 Central Street, Framingham; 63 Fountain Street, Framingham; 41 Taylor St, Springfield. Additionally, TLC will display posters describing general rules for:

- hand hygiene protocols
- mask requirements
- cleaning and disinfecting



- social distancing

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Workplace Cleaning Protocols

The Learning Center for the Deaf has implemented various workplace protocols designed to preserve the health and safety of our employees. For additional information, please reach out to your supervisor.

Checks included for each Campus Building:

- HVAC systems (air circulation, filters). (Based on CDC Guidelines for air filtration [here](#), TLC has replaced all filters with MERV-13 or the highest compatible with the filter rack, and sealed edges of the filter to limit bypass.)
- Assessment of all HVAC equipment to ensure a minimum of 20% intake of outside air
- Plumbing (ensuring floor drains, sinks, and toilets are flushed to prevent sewer build up.)
- Custodial needs (cleaned and sanitized each building, inspecting vacuuming equipment, identified high-touch areas, **developed appropriate increased cleaning schedule and scope of cleaning.**)
- Cleaning supplies (purchased additional soap and hand sanitizer dispensers, cleaning products, sanitizing wipes.)
- Signage has been installed throughout buildings indicating COVID-19 health and safety protocols.

A more detailed checklist can be found [here](#).

Cleaning Protocols & Products:

C&W has maintained an increase in cleaning staff throughout the pandemic. Each building will have a specific list of cleaning and disinfecting protocols for that building accessible to staff. At a minimum, each building will be cleaned once per day and disinfected once per day. High touch points will be cleaned and disinfected throughout the day. A [checklist](#) of cleaning has been hung in each building.

C&W follows all CDC guidelines and manufacturers recommendations regarding cleaning products and protocol. All cleaning products used by C&W meet the CDC guidelines for cleaning viruses and bacteria. TLC has been maintaining an inventory of cleaning products and hand sanitizer for currently open programs and in anticipation of re-opening programs that are currently working remotely. A list of ingredients and Safety Data Sheets for each cleaning product and hand sanitizer will be provided upon request.

The Learning Center for the Deaf may elect to close the office for an interim period of time following a confirmed case to allow for natural deactivation of the virus and/or to allow for deep cleaning.

To help employees remain healthy, The Learning Center for the Deaf has hand sanitizer and disinfecting wipes available throughout the facility. It is suggested that employees wash their hands more frequently than normal. Additionally, C&W has instructed the cleaning crew to disinfect key areas such as faucets and door handles throughout the day. Cleaning definitions are as follows:

Deep Cleaning – removal of dust, debris, and dirt from surfaces by scrubbing, and washing. This includes carpet shampooing, wall cleaning, stripping/waxing, and removal of applicable stains where applicable/able. This terminology would also include disinfection of surfaces. If scheduled, all items should be off of the floor or organized to support this effort.

Sanitizing – reduces bacteria identified on a product's label on surfaces. This crosses over to general cleaning but, we will not call out sanitizing as it'll either be deep cleaning and/or disinfection.





Disinfecting – destroys or inactivates both the bacteria and viruses identified on the product’s label (i.e. COVID/Influenza) on hard, nonporous surfaces. In general, we call this out when disinfecting high touch points with approved chemicals (i.e. Oxivir TB) which has been approved by the CDC and includes knobs, desks, chairs, faucets, urinals, toilets, push bars, buttons, switches, etc.

Disinfecting Protocol:

Employees are required to do their part to help keep the offices and classrooms as clean as possible by cleaning and disinfecting their workstations, desks and surfaces they commonly use, using the CDC guidelines for cleaning. Employees should also avoid using others’ workstations, tools and equipment. If you must touch the equipment with your hand, it should be wiped down prior to and following use. Proper cleaning and disinfecting supplies will be provided by TLC. Employees should wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds after cleaning or sanitizing a surface.

TLC will facilitate the cleaning of common areas and other frequently touched surfaces as needed. The frequency of this cleaning may change depending on the situation.

Supplies to Prevent the Spread:

TLC has provided the following equipment and/or supplies to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace:

- two washable masks per person
- hand sanitizer
- disinfecting wipes (Oxivir wipes)
- disinfecting spray cleaning solution (Oxivir)
- paper towels
- hand soap
- stylus to use for high touch areas (copy machines, elevator buttons, etc.)
- other personal protective equipment (role dependent) such as face shields, gowns, etc. will be provided on an as needed basis

A robust campaign of “Keep TLC Healthy” reminding everyone to stay home if sick, socially distant, wash hands water and soap, and wear a mask will be visible throughout campus.

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Communication Plan

Communication with all stakeholders is critical in ensuring transparent, accessible information. TLC’s Communication and Outreach Plan is robust and multi-faceted, and aims at presenting accurate, updated, informed information frequently in American Sign Language and English, as well as any additional languages as requested by our families.

TLC’s Health and Safety Logo is on all pertinent signage and communication regarding COVID-19. Communication with questions related to COVID-19 should continue to be sent to the Health and Safety email group healthandsafety@tlcdeaf.org. All information about our recovery plans, including videos of presentations as well, DESE updates and CDC guidelines, health and safety information, and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) are available on the [TLC website](#) for parents and other stakeholders.

TLC employs several methods of actively communicating to families, including Constant Contact emails with weekly updates and information, Blackboard text alerts, surveys, and forums. Information is consistently





presented in ASL, English, Spanish, Portuguese, and French, as well as additional languages as families indicate.

Building Access

For specific, high-traffic buildings, there is one point of entry (wherever possible) and one separate point of exit. There is signage on each building to indicate exit and entry and whenever possible and the creation of one-way directional hallways to ease foot traffic congestion.

Elevator Use

Elevator use is restricted to one person at a time and signs on the elevator will remind everyone of this. An exception to this is when a student or another person needs assistance and cannot be in the elevator alone. Should this happen, the maximum capacity is two people, and masks are required.

Remote “punch-in” to Paylocity

All hourly employees are expected to “clock-in” using the Paylocity app on their computer, tablet, or phone in order to have their hours entered into payroll. Instructions on how to log in using the app can be found here in English (Part [One](#), [Two](#) and [Three](#)), and in [ASL](#). Each employee should clock in at the start of their work and clock out at the end of their workday. Paylocity’s mobile app includes GPS.

Personal Travel:

Any employee who travels personally should follow MA state travel order and self-isolation [guidelines](#). As guidelines continue to develop, we will monitor and adjust all safety protocols to ensure the health and safety of our employees. It is important to note that this plan is fluid and is subject to changes and updates based on continually changing state and local guidance, and the pandemic’s evolution.

Personal Protective Equipment

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is used to help minimize the risk of exposure to viruses and bacteria. TLC has been purchasing PPE from various vendors throughout the closure. An inventory of masks, gloves, hand sanitizer, cleaning supplies, goggles and gowns has been procured and will continue to be purchased throughout the closing and reopening phases to meet the general guideline of having a three months’ supply on hand. For most TLC staff, a face covering is the only PPE that will be needed. For some TLC staff, whose job requires additional PPE, TLC has a supply on hand and it will be provided to staff. All PPE is being disbursed based on the requirements of specific jobs. Please see your supervisor to ensure that you have the correct PPE to safely do your job.

Reflection and Next Steps

As nonprofit organization employees -- particularly those in our field of education and community service -- the rate of change we have experienced in the last year and a half is greater than the rate of change school and organization systems have seen in the last two decades. Now, more than ever, we are going to need to be patient, kind, and trust each other to open our hearts and minds to one another’s perspectives. With more changes on the horizon, and the implementation of new systems and models of leading, serving, teaching and learning, we welcome input, and will continue to organize ways to connect and to problem-solve together. The input you have provided has been invaluable, and we want to continue to learn from each of you!

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