

# **GENESIS INNOVATION ACADEMY**

## **PANDEMIC FLU & INFECTIOUS DISEASE POLICY**

### **and PLAN**

Schools tend to be affected by infectious disease outbreaks more than other settings. Children easily transmit illnesses to one another as a result of their close proximity, their inefficiency at containing respiratory droplets and their ineffective hand washing. Genesis Innovation Academy (Genesis) intends to be proactive in protecting the health of our students and staff from contagious diseases.

This pandemic flu/infectious disease plan provides guidance for reducing illness at school on a regular basis as well as procedures during infectious disease outbreaks and pandemic periods. It includes 1) strategies to prevent and reduce the spread of infectious diseases at our schools, 2) procedures for canceling school due to an infectious disease outbreak, 3) considerations for reopening schools.

#### **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

##### **Strategies to Prevent & Reduce the Spread of Infectious Diseases**

**Pages 2-5**

- How Germs Spread
- Disease Prevention & Education
- Hand Washing and Respiratory Education Websites
- Illness/Disease Monitoring & Tracking
- Disinfection & Cleaning Procedures
- Buses
- Food Service Protocols
- Social Distancing
- Where to Get Information

##### **Cancelling School**

**Pages 5-7**

- Legal Authorities for Cancellation of School
- Communicating with Stakeholders
- Continuity of Operations Plan
- Schools as Alternative Care Sites
- Free & Reduced Meals
- Learning at Home

##### **Reopening Schools**

**Page 7**

- Disinfection
- Personnel
- Mental Health Issues
- Making up School Days

## STRATEGIES TO PREVENT AND REDUCE THE SPREAD OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES

**How Germs Spread:** Illnesses such as the flu (influenza) and viruses such as CoVID-19, Norovirus (sudden and violent nausea, vomiting and diarrhea) and colds are caused by viruses that infect the nose, throat, and lungs and gastrointestinal tract. The Coronavirus, flu and colds usually spread from person to person when an infected person coughs or sneezes and the virus is inhaled by another person. Norovirus is spread by infected persons passing germs through food or ineffective hand washing. Germs are also spread by droplets when a person touches something that is contaminated with a virus and then touches their eyes, nose, or mouth. The length of time germs can live on certain surfaces depends on the actual virus.

**Disease Prevention & Education:** To help prevent the spread of any infectious disease, schools have an opportunity to educate students, staff, and the community on social etiquette, good health and hygiene habits, and disease prevention. Genesis will provide hand washing, coughing, and sneezing education any time there is a suspected outbreak, at the beginning of each term, and during the school year as deemed needed by leadership or as requested by staff (as is reasonably possible). The Genesis clinic team will have illness/disease prevention information current and up to date on the Genesis website. During times of suspected or identified infectious disease outbreaks, Genesis may coordinate with Public Health agencies to address an outbreak at the school level.

Our basic educational message is:

- Cover Your Cough
- Wash Your Hands Often
- Stay Home If You are Sick
- Wear appropriate PPE (Personal Protective Equipment)
- Social Distancing

*Wearing Mouth/Nose Covering PPE:* Genesis will teach students proper mask and shield wearing and adjustment techniques when such coverings are deemed necessary to effectively mitigate the risk of spreading an infectious disease.

*Cover Your Cough:* Genesis will teach students the appropriate coughing and sneezing etiquette for situations in which mouth and nose covering PPE is not being worn. Have ample supply of tissues available in each classroom and school area.

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze OR
- Cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve, not your hands.
- Clean your hands after you cough or sneeze.

*Wash Your Hands Often:* Hand washing with soap and warm water is the best option. Hand sanitizers can be effective when there is no access to water. These are provided in each classroom. Staff are encouraged to provide time and opportunities each day for students to practice washing their hands with soap and water: upon arrival at school, after coughing and/or sneezing in hands, at the beginning of the lunch line before eating, after bathroom use, and after recess. Students should also use hand sanitizer upon entering and leaving the computer lab. The computer lab should be wiped down daily.

- Wet hands, apply soap, and scrub for at least 20 seconds.
- Thoroughly rinse under warm, running water.
- Dry hands completely with paper towel. Use paper towel to turn off faucet handles and open restroom doors.
- In some instances, Genesis will install/provide handless washing stations to eliminate the need to touch commonly used surfaces

*Hand Sanitizer:* When hand washing is not readily possible, hand sanitizing can be an effective second-best option. Students will be educated on the appropriate situations to use hand sanitizer and the proper way to dispense and apply hand sanitizer.

*Stay Home if You are Sick:* A primary strategy against the spread of illness is for sick people to stay home from school. This includes students, staff and volunteers. In times of suspected or identified infectious disease outbreaks, sick leave policies for staff and students suspected to be ill or who become ill at school will be identified and possibly modified, clearly communicated, and consistently enforced.

*Social Distancing:* When necessitated by the risk of airborne spread of a particular disease, Genesis will instruct students and staff on how to properly practice physical distancing, where the appropriate distance is determined by public health data and information.

#### **Hand Washing and Respiratory Etiquette Websites:**

National Science Foundation (NSF) Scrub Club  
<http://www.scrubclub.org/home.aspx>

**Illness/Disease Monitoring & Tracking:** During times of a potential infectious disease outbreak, Clinic team members will implement a surveillance system to detect unusual rates of diseases in schools. They will monitor illnesses daily, track illness trends and report to the Director of Business Operations and the Head of Schools. The Clinic Team will follow up on trends and determine if there is a pattern. Once a pattern is identified, the health department will be notified if indicated.

Staff will be trained to be alert to children who are ill. Examples of symptoms to closely monitor include fever, frequent cough and/or sneezing, sore throat, vomiting/diarrhea. Staff will be instructed to send these students to the office for evaluation. Staff will be instructed not to assume that a “frequent flyer” is faking; they might really be ill.

During periods of suspected or identified infectious disease outbreaks, the Clinic Team should protect themselves by wearing appropriate PPE when helping sick students; this includes gown, gloves, eye protection and facial mask. Students who have a cough with a fever or are sneezing with a fever will be isolated and asked to wear a mask until parents pick them up. Having the sick person isolated (separated from others) can help to slow or stop the spread of disease.

The use of a mask is common in health care facilities and helps to contain student secretions until they are sent home. Masks do not mean that students are infected with a specific virus. (Large quantities of medical masks will

be kept at Genesis as an emergency supply). If the student is unable or unwilling to wear a mask, the individuals helping the sick person will need to wear a mask in addition to any other appropriate PPE (gown, gloves, and eye protection).

**Disinfection & Cleaning Procedures:** Keep commonly touched surfaces such as stairway railings, door handles, computer keyboards, bathroom faucets and surfaces, drinking fountains, telephones, and elevator buttons clean by wiping them down with a hospital grade detergent-based cleaner, EPA registered disinfectant, or a 10-1 water/bleach solution. During an infectious disease outbreak, consideration will be given to increasing the frequency of cleaning these commonly touched surfaces and areas based on the nature of the disease. In addition, Genesis will review Public Health agencies to see if there is a need to change HVAC filters.

When an employee or student with a suspected infectious disease is identified and has left the building, their work area, along with any other known places they have been, will be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected. The surface will be cleaned to remove dirt and soil with a cleaning agent and disinfect following manufacturers' recommendations. The person cleaning and disinfecting should wear a mask and gloves and should discard them afterwards. Hands must be washed or sanitized at the completion of the procedure. During times of a specifically known or suspected disease outbreak, Genesis will follow public health agency guidelines to determine if there is a proper way to discard waste.

**Buses:** School buses will be cleaned by the drivers and the facility management team on a regular basis during the normal school year. However, during periods of suspected or confirmed infectious disease outbreak, consideration will be given to increasing the frequency of cleaning schedules, possibly at the end of each route (morning and afternoon) based on the nature and spread of the disease and guidance from Public Health agencies. Bus drivers may also consider wearing masks while on route, for their personal protection.

**Food Service Protocols:** Genesis will only contract with service providers that follow U.S. Department of Education protocols, rules, and regulations in each step of the food preparation process, from receiving to service. In addition, Genesis does independent health and safety audits throughout the school year and participates in regularly scheduled Georgia Department of Education: Nutrition Department audits, and an annual Health Department inspection. All staff members employed by the food services contractor must participate in mandated Department of Education trainings and be certified as successful completers. Contractors are required to ensure that their staff members do not come to work if they have a fever, diarrhea, or vomiting.

During periods of suspected or confirmed infectious disease outbreak, Genesis will consider the need to require modifications to its contractor services based on the severity and nature of the outbreak. This could include, but would not be limited to, any or all of the following:

- Discontinuing the use of self-serve salad bars
- Serving sack lunches instead of cafeteria style lunches
- Requiring that PPE be worn at all times
- Serving pre-packaged meals or meals in closed containers
- Having adults serve meals in classrooms to minimize student traffic in serving line
- Minimizing the number of scholars that can be served in a time period (extending service times)
- Having more stringent sick employee policies, etc.

**Social Distancing:** During suspected or identified infectious disease outbreaks, several social distancing measures will be taken to reduce the spread of an infectious disease. Genesis will discourage hand shaking, and the sharing

of drinks or eating out of the same food container, etc. Genesis will encourage all stakeholders to avoid touching their eyes, nose or mouth and to avoid face-to-face meetings; or, if unavoidable, maintain a distance of 3-6 feet between individuals (depending on the contagion).

Genesis will cancel or postpone non-essential meetings, gatherings, assemblies, field trips, workshops or trainings. Consider setting up staggered shifts, flexible hours, or virtual work schedules to reduce crowding on site.

**Where to Get Information:** If an infectious disease outbreak or pandemic occurs, having accurate and reliable information will be critical. Genesis will consult the following agencies as a regular course of action:

Georgia Department of Public Health

<https://dph.georgia.gov/>

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (HHS)

[www.hhs.gov](http://www.hhs.gov)

[www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

<http://www.cdc.gov>

World Health Organization (WHO)

<http://www.who.int/topics/influenza/en/>

National Association of School Nurses

<http://www.nasn.org>

U.S. Department of Education

<http://www.ed.gov>

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

[www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov)

#### **CANCELLING SCHOOL DUE TO AN INFECTIOUS DISEASE OUTBREAK**

Genesis will collaborate with the Georgia Department of Public Health to monitor disease outbreaks in our schools and to determine if, and/or when, school should be cancelled. The Georgia DPH will also help us decide the length of time for a school closure and the extent of the closure (single school closure, neighboring schools, partial district, entire district, etc.), taking into consideration the mixing of students/staff across schools, geographic proximity, outbreaks at neighboring school districts, etc., based on the nature of the specific disease.

**Legal Authorities for Cancellation of School:** The Genesis Head of Schools/Superintendent has the authority to cancel classes when he/she deems it necessary for the health and safety of students and staff. In the Superintendent's absence, the designated Leadership Team may carry that authority. The *Department of Education* does not have the authority to prevent this decision.

In the event of a local infectious disease outbreak, the *state of Georgia* can also determine if school closure is

necessary for specific schools experiencing an outbreak, or more broadly for the entire state, to protect the public health. Genesis will abide by any determination made by the state of Georgia to close school.

If school is cancelled due to an infectious disease outbreak, all other school-related gatherings (athletic events, concerts, afterschool activities, field trips, etc.) will also be cancelled. In some cases, non-academic events may be cancelled even if classes are not cancelled.

**Communicating with Stakeholders during an Infectious Disease Outbreak:** We will attempt to provide accurate, consistent, and timely communications with staff, students, and parents to instill and maintain public confidence in our schools. Genesis will disseminate critical information from the health department, and common health messages and educational materials in English and Spanish, and take every attempt to demonstrate the school is taking reasonable action to preserve the safety and health of our staff and students.

Information will be disseminated via our normal emergency communication methods: staff email, web site postings, social media, parent letters, school newsletters, television and radio announcements, and mass phone call or texts as needed.

**Continuity of Operations Plan:** Certain essential district-level functions will need to continue even during a school closure situation. *Essential Services* may include:

- Payroll, Accounts Payable
- Communications & Technology (website, learning at home resources, etc.)
- Instructional Planning & Coordination (if virtual learning is deemed plausible and necessary)
- Emergency Operations (planning for reopening of schools.)

Genesis will Identify *Essential Personnel* who will be needed to carry out essential services and determine if those services can be accomplished at home (by computer, through emails, conference calls, virtual meetings, etc.) or by staggering work schedules and locations and using social distancing measures. Essential personnel who report to work during a school closure will be expected to take precautions and wear appropriate personal protective equipment (masks, gloves, gown, and eye protection, etc.) to protect themselves from infectious disease.

**Schools as Alternative Care Sites:** If schools are closed due to an infectious disease outbreak, Genesis will seek state guidance on how to support families using the Genesis school site or referrals to local district school sites.

**Free & Reduced Meals:** If Genesis closes, school leadership will decide if Genesis will provide meals for students who have a 'free or reduced meals' designation. If local districts create "open sites" for meal distribution to all children in their respective districts, Genesis will ensure that its families are notified. Genesis will consult with the Georgia Department of Education: Nutrition Department to determine the best course of action for families. If Genesis has closed the school site due to an infectious disease outbreak, but is still engaged in off-site/virtual instruction, administration will work with Nutrition vendors to provide meals for families to pick up at the school site.

**Learning at Home:** To help students stay educationally engaged while classes are cancelled, Genesis will coordinate virtual learning schedules and activities using the platforms that are already in use (or Genesis will contract additional services that may be needed to enhance the effectiveness of the learning environment). While the assigned work cannot be mandated due to the uncertainties of an epidemic/pandemic environment,

Genesis will strongly encourage families/students to use these resources to maximize learning.

In anticipation of a school closure, Genesis will ensure a process is in place to identify families in need of tech support (internet connectivity, devices, etc.) and to meet those needs (secure services, distribute devices, etc.), subject to resource constraints. Genesis students use electronic platforms throughout the year and would already have basic preparation required to use virtual learning tools effectively.

## REOPENING SCHOOLS

Our primary objective in the recovery phase is to restore the learning environment as soon as possible. Issues to consider include determining if schools need disinfection measures before reopening, staffing levels, and grief/mental health issues. Genesis will also need to develop a plan for students/staff to make up for any learning-loss, as determined by instructional leadership.

As the district resumes normal operation it will remain in contact with state officials regarding disease surveillance. An infectious disease outbreak often comes in waves and the response and recovery process may be repeated several times.

**Disinfection:** There are two primary considerations regarding disinfection: public perception of the safety of the school and actual germs in the school. Disinfection needs will depend primarily on the severity, type, and duration of the pandemic as well as if the school was used as a hospital, feeding center or vaccination site. Although viruses can live up to 48 hours outside the human body on nonporous surfaces such as plastic, metal or wood (depending on the virus), extensive cleaning of schools by wiping down floors and walls prior to reopening is typically not necessary unless specifically directed by public health officials. However, public perception about the safety of schools may impact decisions regarding the extent of disinfection.

**Personnel:** If there have been multiple staff deaths due to the infectious disease outbreak, Genesis will formulate a plan to continue instructional programs with a reduction in workforce and potentially reconfigure staffing levels and positions. School officials will also need to coordinate with all contracted services regarding their staffing abilities.

**Mental health issues:** Depending on the severity of the outbreak, Genesis can use or modify its Crisis Response Team protocols and/or collaborate with local mental health agencies to assist students and staff with loss and grief issues. This process may be much more involved and lengthier than usual Crisis Response protocols.

**Making up school days:** Genesis will collaborate with the *Georgia Department of Education* to work out a plan for making up lost school days, if required by state policy.