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THE PHOENIX CENTER VIRTUAL/REMOTE INSTRUCTION PLAN 2023-2024

Approved by Board of Directors July 19, 2023

Introduction:

The Phoenix Center (TPC) will provide full-time, in-person instruction for the 2023-2024 school year. The virtual/remote instruction portion of this plan will be implemented during a closure lasting more than three consecutive school days due to a declared state of emergency, declared public health emergency, or a directive by the appropriate health agency or officer to institute a public health-related closure. The TPC board of directors will be consulted with, if practicable, prior to implementing the TPC's plan of virtual or remote instruction. A day of virtual or remote instruction, if instituted under a plan approved by the New Jersey Commissioner of Education, is considered the equivalent of a full day of school attendance for the purposes of meeting State and local graduation requirements, awarding of course credit, and other such matters as determined by the New Jersey Commissioner of Education. This plan also includes a range of strategies to implement to reduce risks to students and staff from COVID-19 or any other infectious diseases while still allowing for fulltime in-person learning.

1. General Health and Safety Guidelines:

- 1.1 Vaccination** - Per current health guidelines, vaccination is currently the leading public health prevention strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic. TPC will promote vaccination for students and staff in our learning community and make new information available as it becomes available.
- 1.2 Communication** - School officials and local health departments (LHD) will maintain communications with each other regarding COVID-19 transmission, prevention, and control measures. TPC will work with the LHD as decisions are made regarding which mitigation strategies to implement and when based on health data. Information will be shared with the entire learning community via email and/or school website, as recommended.
- 1.3 Masking** - Masking continues to be an important part of the layered prevention strategies central to the prevention of SARS-CoV-2 transmission and is recommended by CDC for all individuals when COVID-19 community levels are high/orange. School administrators should be prepared for the emergence of new variants or substantial waning immunity that could result in greater morbidity, mortality, and disruption, and require returning to additional mitigation measures. Individuals (including parents/guardians) should make decisions to mask even when school policies may not require masking based on their specific situation (e.g., if they or their family members are immunocompromised or at high risk of severe illness from COVID-19).

1.4 NJDOH recommends that schools require masks in the following circumstances:

1.4.1 During periods of elevated community transmission – when COVID-19 Community Levels are high/orange, NJDOH and the CDC recommend universal masking for all students and staff, especially if there is difficulty incorporating other layered prevention strategies (e.g., adequate ventilation, adequate spacing of students).

1.4.2 During an active outbreak – during an outbreak or a general increase in cases, schools should consult with their LHD as to whether short-term universal masking or masking in affected classrooms should be required to control the outbreak/increase in cases.

1.4.3 After returning from isolation – students and staff who return to school during days 6-10 of isolation should be required to mask, to the best extent possible.

1.4.4 When illness occurs in school – students or staff who become ill with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 or other infectious diseases while in school or care should wear a mask until they leave the premises.

1.4.5 On school transportation – schools should implement a masking policy on school transportation when COVID-19 community levels are high/orange.

1.4.6 Individuals who are required to wear masks in school (e.g., days 6-10 following isolation) should also wear masks on school transportation.

1.4.7 Additional circumstances where mask wearing may be considered:

1.4.7.1 Students or staff who are immunocompromised or live with persons at high risk for severe COVID-19 illness.

1.4.7.2 Individuals who are concerned about disease transmission.

1.4.7.3 Activities or settings with an increased risk of transmission – during medium (yellow) or high community levels, schools may consider implementing masking policies for activities or settings where there is increased risk of transmission.

1.5 Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette – TPC will continue to teach and reinforce handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, and will make hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol, readily available for students and staff. TPC will also continue to maintain adequate supplies including soap, hand sanitizer, paper towels, tissues, and no-touch trash cans throughout the school.

1.6 Meals:

1.6.1 For students who order meals and are virtually learning, parent pick-up is an available option.

1.6.2 Students will eat their meals in the cafeteria/classrooms. As per the CDC COVID-19 Community Levels, when TPC's county (Essex) is in the green (low) and yellow (moderate), students will eat in the cafeteria and when in the orange (high), students will eat in the classroom. Desks/tabletops will be cleaned before and after use to ensure proper cleanliness. TPC will continue to provide free and reduced breakfast and lunch for every student who qualifies. Each breakfast and lunch served will have the required components of a complete meal as per the School Breakfast Program and the National School Lunch Program.

1.7 Transportation - When COVID-19 Community Levels are high/orange, masking on TPC school vehicles will be mandatory. Physical distance between students will be maximized to the best extent possible. Windows will be kept open to increase airflow in buses and other transportation, if possible. High touch surfaces on school buses will be cleaned at least daily. District school buses are under the purview of the sending school districts; however, TPC staff will monitor compliance and report issues of noncompliance to the TPC Assistant Principal.

2. Cleaning, Disinfection, and Airflow:

2.1 Shared Supplies and Equipment - The use of hand sanitizer will be strongly encouraged between use of shared items.

2.2 Cleaning and Disinfection - TPC's cleaning and sanitization protocol will remain in place, which includes at least once daily cleaning and disinfecting surfaces and objects that are touched often, such as desks, countertops, doorknobs, computer keyboards, hands-on learning items.

2.3 Improving Airflow - Classroom hallway doors will be kept opened during the school day whenever possible. In addition, all rooms used by students are equipped with an air purifier.

2.4 Building Maintenance – During an extended period of closure, TPC's essential workers, the custodial staff, will maintain the school building as feasible and needed. The custodial staff will provide a weekly report to the school principal regarding any issues that arise.

3. Monitoring, Exclusion and Response to Symptomatic Students and Staff:

3.1 Monitoring - Parents/caregivers are strongly encouraged to monitor their children for any signs of illness every day as they are the front line for assessing illness in their children. Students who are sick should not attend school. Employees are also required to self-screen/monitor and those who are ill should also remain at home.

3.2 Response to Symptomatic Students and Staff:

3.2.1 TPC will follow current procedures to identify and respond to a student or staff member who becomes ill with COVID-19 symptoms while in a school/building. Staff members with COVID-19 symptoms will be sent home to monitor and test. Students will be placed in the isolation room with a staff member, both wearing well-fitted masks to the best extent possible until their parent/guardian picks them up. Hygiene supplies, including additional cloth masks, facial tissues, and alcohol-based hand sanitizer will be available in the isolation room. Parents and caregivers will be strongly encouraged to have their child tested and monitor them for signs of illness.

3.3 Exclusion:

3.3.1 Definition of COVID-19 Compatible Symptoms - For school settings, NJDOH recommends that students be promptly isolated from others and excluded from school if they have at least two of the following symptoms:

fever (measure or subjective), chills, rigors (shivers), myalgia (muscle aches), headache, sore throat, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea, fatigue, congestion, or runny nose; OR at least one of the following symptoms: new or worsening cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, new olfactory disorder, or new taste disorder. For students with chronic illness, only new symptoms or symptoms worse than baseline should be used to fulfill symptom-based exclusion criteria.

3.3.2 COVID-19 exclusion (isolation) criteria for persons who have tested positive for COVID19 should:

3.3.2.1 Stay home for at least 5 full days after the onset of symptoms or if asymptomatic after the positive test (day of symptoms is day 0; if asymptomatic, day the test was performed is day 0).

3.3.2.2 Individuals who have no symptoms or symptoms are resolving after 5 days and are fever-free (without the use of fever-reducing medication) for 24 hours, can return to school;

3.3.2.3 Masks should be worn in school on days 6-10, to the best extent possible.

3.3.3. An alternate diagnosis (including a positive strep test or influenza swab) without a negative COVID-19 test is not acceptable for individuals who meet COVID-19 exclusion criteria to return to school earlier than the timeframes above.

4. Diagnostic Testing - At all levels of community transmission, TPC will work with its local health department to identify testing options in the community for the testing of symptomatic individuals and asymptomatic individuals who were exposed to someone with COVID-19. Results of all testing must be reported to public health authorities by the entity conducting the testing.

5. Outbreaks - Schools must report outbreaks or suspected outbreaks of all communicable diseases, including COVID-19 to their LHD. The LHD will work with schools to determine if there is an outbreak and provide guidance as to a response. An outbreak of COVID-19 in a school setting is defined as three or more individuals (positive by RT-PCR or antigen) among students or staff with illness onsets within a 14-day period, who are epidemiologically linked, do not share a household, and were not identified as close contacts of each other in another setting during standard case investigation or contact tracing.

To determine epidemiologically linked cases, health departments should verify to the best extent possible that cases were present in the same setting during the same time period (e.g., same classroom, school event, school-based extracurricular activity, school transportation) within 14 days prior to onset date (if symptomatic) or specimen collection date for the first specimen that tested positive (if asymptomatic or onset date is unknown)

and that there is no other more likely source of exposure (e.g., household or close contact to a confirmed case outside of educational setting).

5.1 If an outbreak has been identified, schools and LHDs should promptly intervene to control spread while working to determine whether the outbreak originated in the school setting.

5.2 During an outbreak masking may be temporarily required in affected classrooms.

6. Remote Instruction/180-Day Requirement:

6.1 Remote Instruction/180-Day Requirement Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:7F-9, schools must be in session for 180 days. The statute requires that school facilities be provided for at least 180 days during the school year. Section (b) of the statute notes that where a district is required to close the schools of the district for more than three consecutive school days due to a declared state of emergency, declared public health emergency, or a directive and/or recommendation by the appropriate health agency or officer to institute a public health-related closure, days of virtual or remote instruction commensurate with in-person instruction will count towards the district's 180-day requirement.

7. Technology - Student Devices and Connectivity:

TPC, in collaboration with its sending districts, ensures that students' access to technology is not an obstacle to instruction, but rather a catalyst for learning. All students at TPC have Google Suite accounts that provide them full access to their education in the virtual format. Parents are required to agree to the Acceptable Use Policy for TPC as well as the End User License Agreement for access to Google Suite. For families that do not have Wi-Fi at home, TPC will collaborate with the sending district to provide a mobile hotspot. If access to a technology device and/or internet connection persists, pen and paper/table top activities may also be sent home to students as needed. In addition, TPC has a 1:1 student to technology device ratio and can provide the technology needed for virtual instruction.

7.1 When a student is required to access their education virtually, student participation will be tracked by the teachers, related service providers, supported employment and TPC In House Case Managers (IHCM) using a TPC Student Participation 2023-2024 spreadsheet located in Google Drive. The level of participation for each student will be noted, based on student engagement in Google Classroom, live Meets as well as information gathered from the family. This spreadsheet will be updated weekly, as needed, by each staff member noted above and reviewed by the IHCM. TPC IHCM's will be in frequent contact with the sending district and families in regards to the level of their student's participation and engagement during virtual/distance learning.

8. Student Attendance:

TPC has a dedicated student attendance line as a way for parents to report student absence. Parents are advised to call the TPC student sick line if their child is unable to access and participate in the virtual/remote learning on a particular date for sick or personal reasons.

The school nurse will enter students as absent into Paradigm, TPC's student database, as these calls are received. The student attendance list will then be emailed to all staff each morning by the school nurse. Should a student be called out sick for more than two consecutive days, the health office will contact families to assess wellness. Sending districts will be notified if students are out sick for a consistent/extended basis by TPC IHCM. As noted above, TPC IHCM's will be in frequent contact with the sending district and families in regards to the level of their student's participation, engagement and

attendance during virtual instruction. This level of communication will prevent issues regarding how a student's attendance potentially affects their promotion, retention, graduation, and discipline.

9. Virtual Instruction:

During virtual learning, it is expected that students engage in standard-based learning, which is varied and age-appropriate, under the guidance and direction of the teacher. This instruction shall occur through synchronous and asynchronous virtual face-to-face interactions with teachers, therapists, employment specialists and paraprofessionals, along with assignments posted in Google Classroom and hands-on activities. All instruction is designed to maximize student growth and learning to the greatest extent possible.

TPC allows for flexibility as to when assignments are completed with the support of parents/guardians. It is expected that assignments are submitted to Google Classroom daily. Although synchronous and asynchronous instruction is provided, school hours for students are 8:30am - 2:45pm. School hours for staff are 8:00am - 3:00pm.

TPC conducts IEP meetings, evaluations and other meetings to identify, evaluate and/or reevaluate students with disabilities in conjunction with the sending district, as needed throughout the school year. During virtual instruction, these meetings will be conducted via Zoom or Google Meet, as is appropriate, based on the student's individual needs.

9.1 Full School Virtual Instruction: Should TPC need to be placed on full school virtual instruction, due to a declared state of emergency, declared public health emergency, or a directive and/or recommendation by the appropriate health agency or officer to institute a public health-related closure, instruction will commence as follows:

9.1.1 Classroom teachers will facilitate two live IEP driven sessions with their students each day of full school closure. Special Area Teachers will provide IEP driven sessions as scheduled. Classroom teachers will post IEP driven academic assignments, including materials into Google Classroom on a daily basis. Teachers will email parents/guardians between 8:00 am and 8:30 am each day to touch base in regards to their child's instruction and to offer any assistance that they may need. In addition, teachers and support staff will be available, as needed for additional assistance. Assessment of student progress will be based on completed assignments demonstrated in Google Classroom, photos or videos of work emailed to teachers, and/or anecdotal data obtained during live lessons as well as contact with families via email and/or telephone calls.

9.1.2 All paraprofessionals', whether working in-person or remote, will work their contractual hours Monday through Friday. They will continue to function under the guidance of the classroom teacher. Paraprofessionals will be available via Google Classroom and Google Meet to support the students in learning. They will create a live meeting each day and be available to work with the students throughout the duration of their school day (8:30am to 2:45pm). A scheduled Google Meet will be created to accommodate students during remote instruction who do not have one-to-one assignments. Paraprofessionals will assist in presenting materials, providing accommodations, and demonstrating strategies in order for students to work on assignments. Paraprofessionals will also be able to provide behavioral suggestions under the guidance of the school's BCBA and/or by following the student's behavior plan in order to help students be successful during virtual learning.

9.1.3 Related Services: All related service treatment plans and therapy provided will follow the goals and objectives in the student's IEP, including duration and frequency. Therapy will be delivered via a combination of Google Meet sessions, assignments in Google Classroom and/or phone conference with students and

consultation with parents. Materials are provided through assignments made in Google Classroom or materials that are sent home as needed. Related service providers will update or adjust assignments and materials as needed. Related service providers track services and write therapy log notes (including documentation of progress, accommodations and modifications) on a daily basis. If a student does not attend a live Google Meet session, the therapist will contact the family during that time and note it on the TPC Student Participation log. Assessment of student progress will be based on completed assignments demonstrated in Google Classroom, photos or videos of work emailed to related service providers and anecdotal data obtained during live Google Meets, email and/or telephone calls.

9.1.4 Supported Employment/Career Education: Supported Employment Specialists will supply customized activities to Google Classroom/Google Meet and table top activities for students who are 16 to 21. Supported Employment Specialists will conduct live Google Meets to students on their caseload. Students will be provided with activities that can be completed in the home environment that focus on job skills and are aligned to the Career Education goals in their IEPs.

10. Social and Emotional Health of Students and Staff:

10.1 Educator Well-Being: Staff members will be provided with opportunities to process traumatic events through the use of school counselors, as needed. Self-care and wellness will be a focus for all staff members by providing access to pertinent professional development and workshops. Resources will be made available to all staff members in regards to accessing mental health and trauma supports.

10.2 Trauma-Informed Social and Emotional Learning: TPC will facilitate opportunities for connection and reflection among students and staff.

10.2.1 Students- morning meetings, Get Ready to Learn Yoga, and access to counseling, as needed.

10.2.2 Staff- virtual monthly staff meetings, Birthday Breakfast, Unit/Department Meetings

10.2.3 TPC's Crisis Management plan for loss of life protocol will be utilized when necessary.

10.3 School Culture and Climate: TPC practices the FiSH! philosophy (choose your attitude, play, make someone's day, and be present). TPC makes every effort to ensure the school climate and culture is a healthy one. Spirit days/weeks, Birthday Breakfasts (for staff), and the Hero program (for students) are some of the elements of TPC's efforts to promote a positive school environment for students and staff.

10.4 Wraparound Supports: TPC will continue to provide support to families via Parent Support Groups, Partners in Caring meetings (TPC's Home School Association), and Parent Workshops, which will be held virtually in the event of a school closure.

10.5 All students at TPC have an In-House Case Manager (IHCM), who is the liaison between the sending district, the family and TPC. The IHCM oversees and manages a caseload of students and ensures that any emerging needs are met. Virtual home visits will be conducted as needed. It is anticipated that sending districts will provide wraparound support, extra-curricular programs as well as community programs and resources to families that are offered within the district, in collaboration with TPC's IHCM's.

11. English Language Learners:

The Phoenix Center (TPC) is an accredited, not-for-profit school serving the educational, behavioral and therapeutic needs of students ages 5-21 with autism, multiple disabilities, behavioral and intellectual disabilities. Given the nature of the students' significant disabilities at TPC, the LEA is responsible for notifying TPC of ELL students. Currently, TPC does not have ELL students enrolled in the program. However, TPC provides the following for students and/or their families who demonstrate that translation to their native language is needed:

11.1 A paraprofessional and/or teacher is assigned to an identified student or to the classroom of that student to the greatest extent feasible.

11.1.1 Teachers/paraprofessionals provide instruction, when feasible, in the student's native language.

11.2 TPC translates written materials (i.e., permission forms and general information flyers, etc.) when corresponding with families, as requested.

11.3 Designated staff members are available to communicate with parents via phone calls, as feasible.

11.4 Google Translate is utilized by teachers and related service providers for translating the contents of emails.

11.5 TPC's website is available via Google translate.

11.6 The LEA is responsible for providing interpretive services at mandated meetings (i.e., Annual Reviews, Re-Evaluation Meetings, etc.). TPC's In-House Case Managers will request this service from district case managers when needed in a timely manner.

11.7 Teachers, administrators and related service providers are provided with access to information regarding culturally responsive teaching and learning, social-emotional learning and trauma-informed teaching, as needed.