



Nicaragua Christian Academy

"ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE WITH A CHRISTIAN FOUNDATION"



Updated Health Protocols: Mayo 2022

Introduction

The NCAI leadership teams continue to carefully monitor all available data regarding COVID-19 in Nicaragua and around the world. We are currently seeing multiple conditions that support some reductions in our health protocols:

- The number of Covid cases has dropped dramatically in the past few months throughout the world.
- The latest strains of Covid are less likely to result in hospitalization or serious health issues.
- Many countries have greatly reduced or eliminated many of their COVID-19 health protocols.
- A high percentage of Nicaraguans are vaccinated. 82% have received at least 1 vaccine dose, and 61% are fully vaccinated. ([Source](#))
- Our last reported case of Covid in the NCAI community was over 1 month ago (Feb 23).
- Informal reports from people in the medical community indicate that local hospitals have low numbers of cases and that Covid is on the decline in Nicaragua.
- The conditions on our campus are optimal for reducing the risk of transmission, since most classrooms and other areas are open with plenty of ventilation.
- There have been no signs of increase in cases since our update in April. It seems appropriate to proceed with the next set of changes for the rest of the school year and continue to monitor the situation.

For these reasons, we have established a plan to slowly and carefully reduce our health protocols in three intervals: April 4, May 3, and August 8. Between each of the changes, we will continue to closely monitor and evaluate the results. If we see a significant increase in cases (3 new confirmed reports in NCAI students/staff in the same 30-day period, or 30% increase in cases reported by MINSA), we will either pause the planned reductions or even strengthen the health protocols if appropriate.

Health Protocol Changes Beginning May 3, 2022

The following updates to our health protocols will be implemented on Tuesday, May 3.

- Plexiglass dividers will be removed from most classrooms.
- The use of face masks will be optional outdoors and in classrooms (including when students are working in groups or in close proximity). Masks will still be required in air conditioned areas (including the library, music room, computer labs, and school buses).
- Capacity limits will be restored to normal capacity for spaces such as the library, cafeteria, bathrooms and Eagle Center.
- Social distancing will not be enforced when students are outdoors.

Although there are times when the use of masks is optional, it is the responsibility of parents to decide whether or not to permit their children to remove face masks during the school day. Families who allow their children to remove their masks assume responsibility for their own health risks.

Summary of Health Protocols Remaining the Same

The following health protocols will continue mostly the same as they were in January 2022.

1. **Ongoing health checks:** Parents should continue to check the health of their child on a daily basis and report symptoms to the school nurse.
2. **Exclusion of sick people:** We will continue to require that sick people, especially those who may have Covid-like symptoms, stay off campus according to our established symptom scale.
3. **Handwashing:** Strongly encouraged and emphasized at critical times of the day, including before/after eating and before entering computer labs.
4. **Restricted campus access:** During the school day, campus access is restricted to staff, students, and people who have an appointment. Visitors will be screened before entering.
5. **Arrival:** Upon entry, students must show that they have face masks in their possession for use when required throughout the day.
6. **Dismissal:** Preschool and elementary students will remain in classrooms until called. Secondary students will be dismissed to the parking lot after class unless participating in after-school activities.
7. **Response to reports of COVID-19 cases:** When a teacher or student is reported as having Covid, the administration will notify the school community. The affected person and family members will be excluded according to our policy.

Detailed Description of Health Protocols

If you are not already familiar with our health protocols from last year, please read the following section carefully.

Philosophy

The mission of NCA is “developing spiritual, social, physical and academic excellence in students so that they can be active disciples of Jesus Christ.” The best way to accomplish this mission is through personal and physical presence interactions between students and teachers. Physical presence classes provide the structure, socialization, and stability that are essential to the long-term development of children. As such, we recognize that physical presence education is the preferred mode of teaching and learning for our children.

Our mission to disciple our students, and our relationship with Jesus Christ, compels us to act in love toward all members of our school community. We recognize that COVID-19 has affected the members of our school community in many different ways, and that there are many different underlying philosophies and responses to the situation. Our health protocols are designed to consider three main underlying principles:

1. Mitigate actual health risks according to current recommendations from health authorities;
2. Maintain consistent Christian testimony by respecting authorities and the measures they recommend to slow the pandemic;
3. Demonstrate love toward all members of our school community, striving toward a balanced policy that takes into account the perceptions of parents, students and staff, without being controlled by fear.

Strategies

The primary strategies implemented by NCAI to mitigate health risks are:

- Adequate ventilation in most areas of campus
- Strict exclusion of sick people
- Campus access restricted to staff, students, and people who have an appointment
- Entry and exit procedures, including screening of all visitors
- Required use of masks in some indoor spaces
- Social distancing practices built into many school activities
- Culture of handwashing upon arrival and before/after key transitions

Adequate Ventilation

One benefit of our widely open-air campus is that most classrooms have a lot of fresh air entering on a regular basis. We conducted smoke tests in all buildings to watch natural air movement patterns and ensure rapid dispersion of air that could contain airborne particles. In classrooms where less natural air movement existed, additional ventilation was installed. Aside from certain air-conditioned classrooms and common spaces, all teaching areas of campus exceed recommended air renewal rates, which is believed to greatly reduce the risk of transmission of the virus.

Exclusion of Sick People

Anyone who is sick with a contagious illness should not come to school until the period of contagion has passed, including 24 hours without fever or fever-reducing medication. The school nurse will decide borderline cases based on our symptom scale. People who have symptoms that seem to indicate possible COVID-19 infection will be excluded for 5 days unless an alternative diagnosis or testing rules out COVID-19.

Students who are absent due to illness should communicate with their teachers to request make-up assignments.

Restricted Access to Campus

In order to reduce health risks for our school community, parents and visitors will not be permitted to enter the secure areas of our campus before or during school hours unless they have an appointment with a teacher or staff member and follow health screening protocols.

Arrival Screening

Campus visitors who arrive before or during school hours and have an appointment will be screened before entering. Parent meetings, events and activities during the day or evening will include alcohol spray for all attendees upon arrival.

Face Masks

Required use: Face masks are required in air-conditioned areas including the computer lab, library, music room, offices and in school transportation.

Outdoors and well-ventilated classrooms: Face masks are optional when outdoors, including during arrival, dismissal, in hallways, the Pavilion, ranchones, athletic courts/fields, and playgrounds, as well as when in well-ventilated classrooms.

Young students: Due to the logistical challenges of mask enforcement, students in third grade and below are only required to wear face masks when in air-conditioned areas.

Family decision: Although there are times when the use of masks is optional, it is the responsibility of parents to decide whether or not to permit their children to remove face masks during the school day. Families who allow their children to remove their masks assume responsibility for their own health risks.

Replacement masks: If masks are forgotten, damaged or lost while at school, the cost of \$0.50 for a replacement mask will be charged to family accounts.

Social Distancing

The minimum seating distance between people in the classroom is 4 feet.

Lunch and Breaks

Students are only permitted to eat in designated lunch areas where we can easily supervise adherence to our school policies. Chairs are set up with appropriate distance and should not be relocated.

In order to reduce congestion in the cafeteria, students in 4th-12th grade will not be permitted to enter the cafeteria without a student ID card (for faster payment). Students may continue to use their ID cards from a previous school year; replacement student ID cards cost \$5.00 and can be requested in the front office.

Handwashing

Students will be encouraged to wash their hands upon arrival at school, before and after eating, and before entering the computer labs.

Travel Quarantine

A travel quarantine is not required in Nicaragua. However, we ask that anyone who has traveled or been in situations of increased risk of exposure to COVID-19 more carefully monitor their health. If symptoms appear, they should immediately quarantine, report their symptoms to the school nurse, and follow instructions from the school.

Switch Criteria and Response to Reports of COVID-19

Under certain public health crisis situations, it may be necessary to adjust our educational delivery system for the safety and protection of our entire educational community. We have three primary models of operation, each of which seeks to provide as many of the benefits of physical presence classes as feasibly possible, considering the current levels of health risks in our community. Our “switch criteria” is the set of indicators and thresholds that guide our decision to change between our current model “modified full schedule” and the other two models (reduced schedule / blended learning and 100% distance learning).

Response to Reports of COVID-19

Our health protocols are designed to greatly reduce risk of contagion at school, even when someone who is sick or contagious is present on campus. The protocols were designed with the general assumption that there are symptomatic and asymptomatic people in and among us. Consistently following our health protocols helps us avoid falling into the CDC definition of “close contact”.

When a teacher or student is reported as having COVID-19 (official diagnosis, unofficial diagnosis by private physician, or strong suspicion of Covid based on symptoms), the following steps will be taken:

1. If there is likelihood that others may have been exposed, the administration will communicate with all school parents, students and staff informing them of the Covid report.
2. The person with COVID-19 and close contacts that have any symptoms will be excluded for 5 days according to our symptom scale, and should wear well-fitting masks for an additional 5 days when around people. For those who were in close contact but did not experience symptoms, we recommend testing if possible after 5 days of quarantine to detect the presence of COVID-19, and if positive, to restart the first 5 days of isolation.
3. The classroom(s) of this student will be given a thorough cleaning, sanitizing the desk(s) and chair(s) used by the student.
4. We will not switch the class to distance learning. Parents may make their own decisions regarding school attendance of their children. Students who are absent should communicate with their teachers to request make-up assignments.
5. We will ask teachers of this class to be extra vigilant that our health protocols are carried out completely and not relaxed in any way. This should always be the expectation, but the reminder is appropriate.

Differentiation between Official and Unofficial Reports/Diagnoses

In accordance with our authorities, NCAI cannot consider reported cases of COVID-19 as official unless they are confirmed with a test by MINSA (Ministry of Health) and the results are submitted to NCAI in writing. Although we will communicate all reports we receive with parents, students and staff, we will be clear to differentiate whether the report is based on an official MINSA test or whether it is an unconfirmed Covid report (which would include an unofficial diagnosis by a private physician or strong suspicions of Covid based on symptoms).

Clearly communicating the source of the report is important for other parents to make an informed decision regarding the certainty, severity, and degree of risk presented by the reported case.

Switch Criteria

If an individual class attendance drops below 50%, that class may be moved to distance learning for a period of approximately one week while the rest of the school remains in physical presence classes. If there are verified severe health risks in our community and the whole school attendance drops below 75%, we will transition to a reduced schedule for a period of two weeks (or longer if needed). If the whole school attendance drops below 50%, we may transition to 100% distance learning for a period of one or two weeks (or longer if needed).