

RCS Learning Center
Fall 2020 Reopening Plan

A. Executive Summary

RCS Learning Center will be primarily using an in-person learning model. All students whose families and doctors have determined it is safe for them to return to school are able to be taught using the in-person model. There are a few students who are unable to return to in-person learning due to health and safety concerns expressed by their families and doctors. For those students, the remote learning model will be utilized. RCS has developed a comprehensive COVID-19 Handbook which was disseminated to the RCS community in July 2020 and then updated with information from the DESE guidance documents and redistributed in August 2020. Policies and procedures for all three learning models (in-person, hybrid, and remote) have been developed which allow for effective teaching and oversight to occur. Health and safety procedures as well as strategies to identify and mitigate COVID-19 have been developed and staff have been trained (identifying COVID-19, strategies to mitigate, PPE, health and hygiene practices, etc.). The school environment has been modified to comply with all recommendations outlined within the guidance documents and a thorough cleaning and disinfecting plan has been developed and implemented. RCS has stayed in close communication with families and intends to continue to remain so moving forward. Families will have many opportunities to discuss questions or concerns with both their teaching staff as well as administrative staff. We have also provided opportunities for families to discuss their individual needs as well as the social-emotional needs of their children and will continue to support families as opportunities allow.

B. Letter from Leadership

Dear RCS Families, Staff, and Districts,

As we welcome all of our students and families back to school for the Fall, we would like to say thank you to all of our families for being so supportive, understanding, and kind during these unprecedented times. During the period of shut down, we were amazed at how well many of the students did via our remote learning model and were so happy to get to work more collaboratively with families. Our on-site summer sessions went extremely well. We saw how excited our students and staff were to be together again and we all became fluent with the new policies. With this experience, we intend to offer in-person learning as our primary student learning model as we return for Fall 2020. We would again like to thank our amazing staff, who have shown us how truly dedicated they are to their students and to RCS as an organization.

As we return to school this Fall, RCS policies and procedures will largely be the same as the summer months, however, we are now able to put even more planning into how we will set up for the year given that some students will be on-site and others will continue to learn remotely. Additionally, we have altered some of our policies in order to address more recent knowledge of COVID-19 and strategies to mitigate as well as allow for different student learning opportunities to occur. Our policies and procedures have

been updated to meet the new state guidelines for reopening as well as to ensure the health, safety, and well-being of all of our families, students, and staff.

Please review this updated handbook as many of our policies and procedures have been updated.

**Please note that our regular policies outlined in our Health Care Manual and Parent Handbook are still in place. This handbook may be updated as needed based on additional guidance or new medical information.

Sincerely,

Denise Rizzo, RCS President /COVID-19 Point Person

Christina King, Executive Managing Director

Elizabeth Kelsey, Assistant Director

C. In-person Learning Model

Many RCS students have already been attending in-person learning over the Summer months. There were a multitude of environmental changes as well as changes in health and safety practices that will continue into the Fall, however teaching procedures, ratios, data collection procedures, and educational content remain the same as prior to COVID-19. RCS staff are all expected to wear face masks and other PPE as needed during the entire school day. RCS students are also expected to wear masks, however, given their disability, there are some students who are exempt or are working towards increasing their face mask usage. Social distancing protocols are well established and followed by all in the RCS community. There are times, given the RCS student population, that therapists and teachers must get closer to the students in order to assist and increased PPE are used in these situations as outlined in the DESE PPE guidance document. Additionally, plexiglass partitions were placed on student desks in order to create another barrier between the therapist and the student. There is at least 6 feet distance between students and no more than 3 students in a classroom. Distancing protocols are followed when there is more than one student in a classroom. Common areas have been closed with students attending group educational times via zoom sessions from their own classrooms. Students are and will eat in their classrooms, rather than the cafeteria. Teachers have increased the amount of outdoor time for all students. RCS students may access the community via the school van. In the event that RCS is transporting students, staff and students will wear masks, there will be no more than 2 students transported within the van with their accompanying 1:1 therapists, and a thorough cleaning and disinfecting routine will be followed before and after transporting. RCS will work with individual families and community placements in order to determine if students will access that environment. There is an increased amount of hygiene and handwashing, which again will continue. RCS has secured two portable sinks to use at arrival and dismissal and throughout the day as needed. Hand sanitizer has been provided to staff to keep in a secured location (inaccessible to students) and in several dispensers throughout the facility. We have designated staff to keep up with

outlined cleaning protocols throughout the day as outlined within our COVID-19 policies. Staff and students have been through training/lessons on COVID-19 and our policies and procedures. We will continue to provide training to staff and lessons to students as more is learned. Parent communication has been a priority as students have returned to school and will remain at the forefront of our efforts moving into the Fall.

D. Hybrid Learning Model

Since we expect to accommodate all enrolled students who would like to attend in person, it is highly unlikely that RCS will use a hybrid model. However, in the event that this is determined to be appropriate, we would work through the 5-step prioritization model DESE has provided to assist in scheduling. In the event that this occurs, we would implement an A/B schedule system in which some of the students attend half of the days of the week and the other students attend the other half of the week. The number of students in each of these schedules would depend on the results of our prioritization process, parent input, and also incorporate factors related to the reason we would be using a hybrid model. Hybrid learning would be a combination of the in-person procedures outlined above and the remote outlined below. We would implement all remote teaching expectations as outlined in a full remote program and all health and safety/environmental and teaching expectations as outline in a full in-person program. There would be an emphasis on parent communication. Teaching and Clinical Staff would work with families to identify which IEP objectives would be more appropriate for remote learning and which for in-person learning and then design the schedule as such.

E. Remote Learning Model

RCS is at an advantage given our ongoing staffing ratios. Behavior Therapists and Teachers can continue to deliver 1:1 instruction with students even in the event remote learning is occurring. During these instructional sessions, data on student responding will be collected. In a remote learning model, RCS clinical and teaching staff will work directly with students by primarily using a telehealth model/Instruction and Services Model. Synchronous one on one learning will be the primary model with students attending sessions via zoom or conference call. IEP goals and objectives will be addressed (in line with state standards) during this time with the use of varying technological programs (e.g. google classroom, boom cards, headsprout, and brainpop). Therapies (SLP,OT) and PE will be delivered via zoom sessions when appropriate or assigned directly to the student (i.e. PE activities). Families may be required to assist with some student programming (i.e. ADLs, feeding programs, OT programming, etc.). Students are expected to attend sessions daily and data will be collected on student responses and behaviors during the sessions. Families of the students will likely need to be involved in the daily teaching in order to log the students on and off, prompt, or reinforce the student's responses; therefore, therapist/teacher-parent interaction will be higher than usual. Consultations (BCBA Consults, SLP, OT) can occur via zoom as well and this will also provide an opportunity for parent communication to occur. Progress reports will be written based on the data collected during remote learning sessions.

F. Out-of-School time plan

RCS is a private, special education day program and is primarily here for our students school needs, however, we are staying in close communication with all families and will act to support their needs during this complicated time. In the event that a family requires assistance before or after school or on the weekends, we will work with their sending school district to identifying supports within their local community. Additionally, we will assist families to investigate how to procure additional supports including, but not limited to: private ABA home consultation, tutoring, childcare, social skills groups, and extra-curricular activities.

G. Student Supports and professional learning

When re-opening in July, RCS offered two community meetings for parents to ask questions and share concerns as well as discuss the potential risk of sending their child to school. RCS also provided a handbook to families, staff, and districts to outline updated policies and procedures. Ongoing communication with families occurred over the summer. In planning for the 2020-2021 school year, we have offered one more information session and will continue to discuss individual student and family needs on an ongoing basis. Additionally, we will maintain close ongoing contact with all families and conduct frequent pulse checks as we progress through the year.

We will allocate additional attention to increasing parent communication and assessing student and families social and emotional needs as they return on site. Part of our conversations will focus on the needs of the family during this trying time. For remote learning, we will continue to provide an individualized program based on that students IEP. We will work with families to provide support in the areas of technology, academic, behavior, and social-emotional needs. We will continue to work with families to assess their access to technology (hardware and software) and collaborate with families and districts on an as needed basis. RCS Clinical Staff will work closely and collaboratively with families in order to identify their areas of need and support. In a hybrid model, we will merge these two supports with attention on family communication, social-emotional supports, technology support, and our usual educational and behavioral programming. We will continue to work with districts to support families whose primary language is one other than English or who have limited access to written material by translating and/or communicating in spoken rather than written language.

Student assessments and intervention will occur as scheduled and as needed throughout the year.

A school professional development training calendar has been developed and will be followed throughout the year regardless of learning model followed by the students.

H. Other

Attendance will be tracked daily and it will be noted whether the student attended in-person or remotely. Regardless of learning model, RCS students are expected to meet structured learning requirements. Complete non-participation in asynchronous and/or synchronous learning would be considered an absence/extended absence and will be reported as such.

Students who are not on-site at RCS Learning Center full time will continue to have individualized learning plans developed and shared with their families and sending school district as a method of documenting the method of service delivery.

Visitor Policy and Parent Involvement

Non-essential visitors will be limited during this phase of reopening. Contracted service providers and evaluators should deliver services remotely/conduct assessment remotely to the extent possible. When this is not possible, a plan will be worked out with the consultant/evaluator and Clinician prior to the visit. Parent Meetings, IEPs, Parent Advisory Group and any other meetings will be held virtually when possible. In the event that a parent meeting or IEP must occur in person, the parent will visit only offices or outside spaces within the building, must wear a mask, and it is recommended that only one guardian attend the visit. On-site parent visits may be limited in duration.

Parent communication will continue to occur at a high level. RCS utilizes a variety of parent communication approaches including mass emails, individual emails, texting, phone calls, and video conference. Parents may respond to RCS communication through any of these means as well. When in doubt, parents are encouraged to contact their child's Clinician. Parent-Clinician meetings will continue to occur as outlined in our handbook and on student's service delivery.

Additional Documents

RCS Families and districts have been provided with a COVID-19 Handbook which outlines policies and procedures in detail. These policies and procedures were developed in line with all DESE guidance documents.