

Green Chimneys School Operating Plan

2022-2023



Green Chimneys School Operating Plan

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Green Chimneys School Operating Plan and Protocol	2
Communication/Family and Community Engagement	3
Health and Safety	3
Educational Programming and Services	6
Social Emotional Well-Being	6
Athletics and Extracurricular Activities	7
Child Nutrition	8
Facilities	8
Attendance and Chronic Absenteeism	9
School Schedules	10
Transportation	10
Additional Information for Residential Students	10
Resources	11

Introduction

As we welcome our students, staff and families to another school year, we remain committed to providing an optimal educational experience for all. The following plan has been developed in accordance with New York State Education Department (NYSED), Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Department of Health (DOH) guidelines, and through intensive review of the practices and protocols that kept our campuses healthy over the last two years.

We continuously review and adapt our program and protocols to meet the individual academic and therapeutic needs of each and every student; adhere to the most effective health and safety standards for students and staff within a school and residential environment; and ensure preparedness for any necessary changes to our daily operation.

Green Chimneys staff support these efforts by carrying out their roles in alignment with our **Guiding Principles**, the blueprint for how we deliver our services and collaborate with each other to do so:

- We value and promote **Human-Animal and Nature-Based Interactions**, understanding the impact they have on social development and emotional growth.
- We provide supports that are **Trauma Informed** to create an environment of safety and promote empowerment to the individual while allowing them to heal.
- We provide children, their families, and our staff with opportunities for learning and growth by establishing expectations and goals that are **Individualized and Strength Based**.
- We are **Family Centered**, recognizing that families are the experts on their child and that strong family and community connections are essential to positive growth and change and a sense of well-being.
- We believe that **Positive Reinforcement** creates an environment that fosters growth and the development of skills.
- We value a **Collaborative Culture** built on professionalism, accountability, respect and the unique contributions of all team members.
- We are committed to constant **Quality Improvement** through continuous evaluation, research and adaptation.

Green Chimneys School Operating Plan and Protocol

Green Chimneys' Administrative Team has reviewed and updated all procedures to align with the CDC Operational Guidance for K-12 Schools. This document serves to provide all schools, as well as their employees, contractors, students, and parents/legal guardians of students with precautions to help protect against the spread of COVID-19.

We support the belief that in-person instruction is the best option for learning and receiving related support services.

- We believe that in order to maximize the benefits from our enriched environment and array of services, supports, academics and other programming, in-person learning is vital.
- For our residential students, we have implemented practices and protocols to maximize the health, safety and well-being of the children who stay in our dormitories so that they may continue to benefit from our therapeutic milieu.
- We will provide an option for Google Classroom if a student must be quarantined or isolated due to COVID-19. Google Classroom and Zoom will be utilized in an event of a temporary school closure.
- All related services will also continue to be delivered in person, with the potential for remote delivery should school closure become necessary.

Green Chimneys collects data on COVID vaccination rates for staff members and students. If your child is vaccinated, please submit a copy of the vaccine card to the School Nurse or Health Center. Vaccine status will be kept secure in line with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), a federal statute that protects the privacy of student education records: <https://www.greenchimneys.org/therapeutic-special-education/parents-families/school-policies>

It is strongly recommended that all eligible individuals stay up to date on vaccination.

Plan Updates

Please note that this plan is subject to change. Plan updates and policy changes will be communicated by way of the notification applications and online tools indicated in the Communication/Family and Community Engagement section of this plan.

Communication/Family and Community Engagement

Communication Specifics

- We will continue to maintain direct communication with parents/guardians and local health authorities/oversight bodies, including New York State Education Department (NYSED); Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS); and our local health department.
- In addition to regular communication that occurs between families/children and their assigned social worker, communications with parents will include the use of School Messenger (notification application), email, and our website: www.greenchimneys.org/therapeutic-special-education/parents-families/announcements/virus-update/
- Ongoing communication will also occur between Green Chimneys and every child's home school district.
- We encourage families to reach out to their assigned social worker or Green Chimneys administration with any questions or concerns.

Health and Safety

Health and Safety Specifics

- Green Chimneys is a mask-positive environment and respects individual choice and comfort level regarding masks.
- Staff and students are required to wear masks day 6-10 after isolation after a positive diagnosis of COVID. It is also recommended that all students and staff wear a mask for 10 days when there is known or suspected exposure.
- Youth will be encouraged to sanitize hands often, between any activities and before and after eating; child-appropriate signage encouraging proper handwashing and sanitization has been posted throughout the school and across our campus.
- Child-appropriate visual reminders for proper hygiene, covering coughs, and recognizing COVID symptoms are posted throughout our buildings.
- Bottle filler stations are available for staff and students to utilize.
- A School Nurse or Health Center staff are available 24 hours daily and will be contacted immediately for any symptoms in students, staff, or visitors so isolation protocol can begin.
- All employees have been educated on recognizing COVID symptoms and employee sick policies have been reinforced.

- All Green Chimneys employees are instructed to stay home if they are sick.
- Staff members who, for any reason, may need testing and are unable to access community diagnostic testing in a reasonable timeframe, may be tested at Green Chimneys.
- All staff meetings are held virtually whenever possible, precautions should be used with in-person meetings.
- Staff absenteeism is closely monitored and tracked/documentated to identify any trends/concerns.
- Green Chimneys works closely with its local department of health upon discovery of COVID-19 positive cases in students or staff members. Collaboration with our local department of health ensures we are following the most recent guidance, and aids us in making decisions regarding ways to slow/stop viral spread, including temporary closure for deep cleaning/disinfecting and possible classroom or campus wide closures for longer periods of time.

Day School Parent/Guardian Responsibilities

- Students who have had contact with a COVID-positive person should follow Department of Health recommendations including monitoring for symptoms, masking, and testing.
- Parents will be called to immediately pick up a student who is showing viral symptoms or develops a fever.
- Parents are asked to adhere to our student sick policy and students should not return to school until they have received proper clearance from our Health Center. In accordance with Department of Health guidelines, students who are sent home or are absent from school with viral symptoms MAY be asked to provide the following before returning:
 - A clearance note from a health care provider
 - A negative COVID test
 - Resolution of symptoms

*In cases of chronic conditions, individual determinations will be made by the Director or Assistant Director of Nursing.

- Parents are asked to ensure items taken home from school are disinfected regularly, including personal masks.

COVID-Positive Cases

- Department directors are responsible to notify any staff who may have been exposed. Staff with potential, extended exposure will be asked to monitor for symptoms and comply with masking and test recommendations as applicable. Health Center staff will notify any families of potential exposure. Residential students may be tested on site at our Health Center.

- Per current policy, positive students or residents will need to return home and not return to campus until the Department of Health required timeframe for quarantine has passed and/or all symptoms have cleared for a period of not less than 72 hours.
- Should a child show symptoms/fever and need to wait on campus until a parent/guardian arrives, isolation protocol will be put into place and includes full PPE for staff members monitoring/caring for the child/student. Students with suspected/possible COVID will be kept separate from other ill students and be required to mask until picked up from school.
- Affected Placing Agencies/School Districts will be informed via email.
- Green Chimneys will seek and utilize additional guidance from our local Department of Health should positive cases occur on our campus.
- Areas of campus or the entire school may have to close following a confirmed cluster of case(s) or outbreak of COVID, the length of closure will be determined after consultation with the Department of Health.
- Families will be notified of any closure through School Messenger. Day students are not to report to school. Residential students should remain on campus unless they are COVID-positive, or if directed by the Department of Health that there is a need to close one or more dormitories.
- Should a temporary school closure be necessary, Green Chimneys will ensure that all students begin receiving remote education and services immediately.

Cleaning and Disinfecting

As a 24-hour facility, Green Chimneys maintains a round-the-clock cleaning schedule with heightened infection control procedures, including additional sanitizing of commonly accessed surfaces. Hand sanitizer dispensers have been installed throughout our campuses, and increased signage recommends handwashing before and after all activities.

Green Chimneys' detailed cleaning protocol can be viewed at <https://www.greenchimneys.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/GC-Env-Services-Cleaning-Protocol-8.25.22.pdf>

Educational Programming and Services

Education Specifics

All classrooms will have a maximum of 12 students.

- Students will continue to have access to their assistive technology, device(s), and the accommodations, modifications, aids and services in person or when students are working remotely.
- Our CSE Chairperson collaborates regularly with Green Chimneys staff who deliver related services or instruction and communicates with school district CSE Chairs about how services are being delivered based on students' IEP, and completes IEP progress notes to communicate progress.
- Emergency Drills: All required lockdown and evacuation drills will continue with some slight modifications for physical distancing.

Social Emotional Well-Being

Social Emotional Well-Being Specifics

- Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is embedded throughout our curriculum, reinforced through the provision of related services and a part of overall treatment services provided to students.
- All students are assigned a Social Worker/therapist and have individual counseling, and group counseling, as per their IEP.
- Our Quality Assurance department collects incident data, which provides staff members working with children information on types and patterns of behavior and their antecedents. This data is reviewed monthly and used to adjust children's Individual Crisis Management Plans, Treatment Plans, and/or FBA/BIPs.
- We currently use the Child and Adolescent Needs Assessment (CANS) to identify the needs of our students, including exposure to and symptoms of trauma.
- For youth and families who require/request additional services and supports, both day program and residential social workers will connect families to community-based services that can be delivered in the child's home and/or community.

Athletics and Extracurricular Activities

- Recreation is a cornerstone of our treatment philosophy. We believe that recreation has a profoundly positive impact on youth's physical and emotional well-being. The following recommendations by the CDC will be considered in our planning:
 - Setting of the event, particularly indoors or out
 - Physical closeness of participants
 - Number of people, including participants and spectators
 - Intensity of the sport
 - Duration of time
- Anyone showing symptoms of COVID-19, regardless of vaccination status, will not participate in any team sports or recreation events.
- Equipment will be cleaned and sterilized after each session.
- Handwashing before and after programming will be strongly encouraged to all participants.
- Suspension of sports and extracurricular activities and/or mandatory testing may be possible following guidance from our local DOH.

Physical Education

- Students will attend Physical Education (PE) programming including: PE class, outdoor education, aquatics, and horseback riding with students who are in their classroom.
- The Physical Education curriculum is designed to keep the students moving and getting exercise, however, the emphasis will focus much more on developing individual skills.
- Equipment will be cleaned and sterilized after each class.
- Handwashing before and after class will be strongly encouraged to all participants.

Arts Programming

Students in school are dealing with global crises like inequality, environmental destruction, and systemic oppression, in addition to the fears they may have over the current pandemic. The arts are an excellent outlet to allow students to have a voice and ways to express themselves.

Child Nutrition

Child Nutrition Specifics

- Students have returned to eating in the Dining Hall. If necessary, students could be directed to eat in classrooms or dorms during an increase in cases.
- The Food Service Director has developed extensive daily and weekly cleaning and hygiene procedures with dining hall staff. Staff are required to change their gloves frequently and wash their hands multiple times a day. All food service staff must wear a face mask while prepping food, packing food, serving food, and cleaning the kitchen.
- Food allergy plans will continue to be accommodated. The crates used are sanitized after each use.
- Green Chimneys continues to follow Child Nutrition guidelines and provide a protein, ½ cup of vegetables, a fruit, a dairy product (milk or yogurt), and a grain (whole wheat) for all meals. All condiments are offered in individual packets. Daily production records are kept for breakfast and lunch to accurately account for each meal that leaves the kitchen. Google Classroom and a Google Doc are used to collect information from each classroom regarding numbers of students in attendance and meal requests.

Facilities

Facilities Specifics

- We are able to promote physical distancing within our education facilities without having to install any sort of light-transmitting plastics or dividers. All bathrooms are single occupancy. The bathrooms are designated either for students or staff only and remain locked at all times.
- Hand sanitizer dispensers are installed in all classrooms and common areas to help promote cleansing of hands when entering an area.
- Square footage within the school has been measured and utilized to determine the number of students allowed in classrooms and other programming spaces.
- Water fountains have been replaced with units that include bottle fillers in the school buildings as well as the gym lobby. Bottled water is provided to students during meals.
- UV lighting has been installed in the school buildings. For information related to the use of UV lighting, please visit www.freshaireuv.com
- Ventilation is encouraged; windows and doors may remain open, unless otherwise directed by fire or safety regulations.

- Green Chimneys has reviewed and is aligned with facilities recommendations for schools. For more information, see Guidance Document for Schools linked under “Resources” section.

Attendance and Chronic Absenteeism

Attendance Policy

Green Chimneys is committed to ensuring the safety, proper location and accountability of all youth and to the appropriate documentation of such.

Documentation of Absences *Excused Absences vs. Unexcused Absences*

Excused absences are those absences that both the school and the parent/guardian approve. Absence because of illness or appointments, which cannot be made outside the school day, may be excused if a parent calls requesting this absence be excused.

Examples of Excused Absences

- Sickness
- COVID-related quarantine
- Hospitalization
- Doctor’s visit
- Related Services appointment or other school activity such as Learn and Earn
- Religious holiday
- Extreme family emergency (e.g., death in the family, hospitalization of family member, house fire, etc.)
- School district will not transport due to holiday or weather

Examples of Unexcused Absences

- Missing the bus
- Oversleeping
- Personal reasons
- Staying home to babysit/work
- Keeping a lonely parent/guardian company
- Lack of required immunizations
- Family vacation
- Attending a summer camp
- Absences in which the student failed to provide a reason that would establish a valid reason for absence
- Any absence the Administrator feels would be clearly detrimental to the continued education of the student

Attendance for COVID School Closure (if necessary)

- A student will be marked as present if he/she participates in virtual lesson on Zoom or other platform (either showing their face and/or communicating when called upon) and/or completes all assignments for that day sent by teachers via email or Google Classroom.
- A student will be marked absent if student does not participate in virtual lesson and does not complete all assignments sent by teachers for the day.
- All attendance is recorded daily in the student's record.

School Schedules

School Schedule Specifics

- Green Chimneys does not intend to alter the daily or yearly school schedule as part of our plan.
- Should a school closure be necessary for any length of time, all students would be switched to a remote learning plan.

Transportation

Green Chimneys does not provide transportation to or from school and is exempt from transportation assurances. Families of children using transportation provided by the home school district should contact their district's transportation office.

Residential Transportation is addressed in the section pertaining to Residential Students only.

Additional Information for Residential Students

- Residents will continue to be offered afterschool and evening programming that includes: intramural athletics, aquatics, therapeutic recreation and art activities, farm activities, life skills groups, and clinical groups.
- If a school closure is in force, residents should remain on campus unless they test positive for COVID, or otherwise advised by the Department of Health.
- Residential students who test positive for COVID should return home and remain on isolation following Department of Health guidance.
- Residential transportation for home visits will follow a regular schedule.

Social Emotional Learning

- Weekly community circles are held in the dorms. These groups allow for youth-led conversation around a weekly topic. This is an opportunity to allow youth to share feelings and experiences regarding COVID, and all of the changes that have occurred this past year.
- Life skills groups are also being used to provide education about COVID and provide additional opportunities for students to ask questions and share concerns.

Health and Safety in the Dorms

- Dorm surfaces (tables, desks, handles, doorknobs, etc.) are wiped down regularly throughout the day.
- An assigned point person in each building disinfects common areas in each building/dorm unit.
- Laminated posters are visible in each dorm unit that demonstrate proper masking and practices to slow viral spread.
- Every resident has/will be provided with information on how they can earn “ROCK bucks” (part of PBIS rewards system) for wearing mask/washing hands.
- Each dormitory unit has posted, child-appropriate signage for proper handwashing method.
- Each dormitory unit has a plan for and actively encourages healthy hygiene practices

Resources

NYS Department of Health website: <https://www.health.ny.gov>

CDC COVID-19 Guidance for Schools:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-childcare-guidance.html>