

**UPDATE:** June 18, 2020

## **OUR COMMITMENT TO SAFETY COVID-19 RESPONSE**

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis Benedictine has acted quickly to modify our policies and procedures based on the information we received from the Maryland Department of Health and the CDC. Below is an overview of our response and new policies we have put in place to minimize the impact on COVID for our Benedictine community. We will continue to modify our policies based on the most up to date information and communicate those changes to key stakeholders utilizing various communication channels. Depending on the circumstances these changes could either take the form of easing, retracting or tightening these policies.

### **Employee Health Monitoring**

Staff have been required to perform a self-assessment of their current health condition prior to each shift and to stay home if they are ill. Temperature checks are performed for each employee prior to the start of every shift and if they become sick during a shift they are to leave work immediately.

### **Student/Adult Health Monitoring**

Our employees continuously monitor the health of our students and adults we support for any changes. We also check their temperatures multiple times a day for any fluctuations.

### **Personal Protective Equipment**

Benedictine has a full supply of Personal Protective Equipment for its employees. This includes: gloves, N95 masks, gowns, and face shields. We also have developed “Go Bags” with all the equipment required to work with someone who is showing symptoms, being tested, or has tested positive, for COVID-19.

### **Cleaning Standards**

We have developed a “Culture of Clean” employee training and policy manual. Employees are trained on how to safely clean and sanitize their areas. We are purchasing new equipment to aide in sanitizing areas of campus and our group homes. We have contracted with a 3rd party vendor to sanitize all areas of campus and our group homes.

## **Face Coverings**

At this time employees and all visitors must wear face masks when visiting Benedictine owned facilities.

## **Visitor Policy Changes**

We have instituted a Tiered Visitor Policy in response to COVID-19. The decision to move from Tier to Tier will be based on internal assessment of the current situation and in response to government orders. All changes to the visitor’s policy will be communicated through various sources.

**Tier 4:** Normal Operations. Visitors are allowed in building on campus and in our group homes. This would be described as normal operations.

**Tier 3:** Family visits may occur inside the facilities but only in certain locations identified by staff. Visits will be limited in duration and number of family members allowed. Health screenings will take place prior to the visit. No other visitors allowed in Benedictine owned facilities. All visits must be scheduled

**Tier 2:** Family visits may occur, but only outside of Benedictine’s facilities (campus and group homes). Health screening will take place prior to the visit. No other visitors allowed in Benedictine owned facilities. All visits must be scheduled.

**Tier 1:** No visitors allowed on the premises or inside of any Benedictine owned facilities.

## **Hand Washing**

We have placed visual reminders for employees and the people we support to wash their hands in accordance with CDC guidelines. We have increased the availability of hand sanitizing stations and provided each group home with a supply of hand sanitizer.

## **Social Distancing**

We have visual reminders for social distancing in Benedictine's facilities. We do understand that this may not be possible when working with the people we support, but we do ask staff when interacting with each other to follow CDC guidelines for social distancing.

## **Remote Work Options**

Within Benedictine's organization structure there are certain functions that can be performed remotely. In order to minimize the number of employees on campus and in our offices we have developed a remote work policy that can be implemented by department directors at their discretion.

## **Increased use of Technology**

In response to the limits placed on gatherings, Benedictine has begun using various forms of technology to communicate and facilitate meetings. We are building our capability to utilize multiple video conference platforms to host and participate in virtual meetings

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**UPDATE:** March 25, 2020

## **SCHOOL MESSAGE**

Good Afternoon,

As you may have heard, this morning Governor Hogan and Maryland State Department of Education Superintendent Karen Salmon announced the continued closing of public schools in Maryland. Following that guidance, Benedictine will also remain closed until at least April 24th.

We recognize that this continued closure is very impactful to our students and their families. Please know that we are working to implement plans for continued learning opportunities for students as well as to ensure stability for our staff and ongoing programming. This is amidst a lack of definitive guarantees or information from our funding agencies.

For those students who remain in Benedictine residential settings, we will continue to provide a modified program of activities during the day. This will ensure continuity of learning for students.

For those students who are home with families including day students as well as residential students who are home, we will provide continued learning opportunities via learning packets, online resources, and access to the Benedictine team for support. We will contact you in within the next week to discuss how that is implemented.

We will continue to monitor the COVID-19 pandemic in conjunction with our state and local health agencies and we will maintain and implement protocols for the safety of our students, staff, and community. This includes continued evaluation of our visitation policies. We will follow the best advice of health officials and may need to make the difficult decision to implement additional restrictions in the coming weeks based on that advice.

Benedictine leadership and Board are committed to the ongoing and future programming for our students. We appreciate your collaboration in dealing with this situation that is so unique for our community and we continue to be grateful for your support.

Julie Hickey

Education Director

Scott W. Evans

Executive Director

## ADULT SERVICES MESSAGE

Good afternoon:

Since our initial correspondence on March 13, 2020, Benedictine leadership has continued daily monitoring of the CDC and state of Maryland requirements and recommendations related to COVID-19 and, as you are aware have adjusted our response accordingly. Our highest priority remains the health and safety of your family members and the Benedictine staff who support them.

Today, Governor Hogan and his administration took additional steps and announced that school closures have been extended through April 24, 2020. Staffing for Benedictine's Day and Residential Services continue as we have since Wednesday, March 18, 2020 through this extended time frame. While staff have been settling into new assignments this past week, team leads have been gathering, purchasing, and distributing supplies to the homes. In the coming

weeks, they will continue to research ideas for productive activities as well as develop schedules that support, as much as possible, ongoing work on meaningful day goals.

Benedictine leadership is in regular contact with funders and working diligently, along with other providers and advocates, to secure commitments for ongoing funding as well as reimbursement for added expenses associated with emergency supplies and appropriate DSP compensation. We also continue to monitor our visitation policies and will follow the best advice of health officials, and may need to make the difficult decision to implement additional restrictions in the coming weeks based on that advice.

Benedictine will continue to monitor developments with COVID-19 in conjunction with state agencies and local health officials and provide updates via email as the situation unfolds. All correspondence can also be found on the main page of our website [www.benschool.org](http://www.benschool.org).

We appreciate continued conversations as we navigate these unique circumstances. Thank you for your support and cooperation.

Beth Mathis

Adult Services Director

Scott Evans

Executive Director

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## **UPDATE: *March 19, 2020 4:00 p.m.***

Good Afternoon,

I want to first extend my appreciation regarding the feedback and well wishes that have been sent in support of our employees. We have passed along many of the comments in my daily updates to the employees. Each morning I meet with the leadership from each department to review any program updates and new/updated information from our state partners. The good news for today is there are no programmatic changes to announce. Everyone on campus and in our homes has started to settle into the new normal. Leadership continues to monitor the situation closely and work with the local emergency management agency and health department on ensuring we are receiving the most up to date information on COVID-19. The Board of Directors and I met yesterday to review our response to COVID-19 and discuss how they can continue to support our employees and people we serve at this difficult time. Over the past week, and

moving forward, the Board President and I touch base daily for updates and a review of the situation on campus and in our community homes.

I also wanted to remind everyone about our updated Visitor Policy (dated March 16, 2020), which is listed below. I would ask that when you reach out to coordinate a visit please take into account that everyone is juggling many balls right now. We have enacted the Visitor Policy for the safety of the students, adults and employees and cannot deviate or make special arrangements at this time. When developing the policy we did take into account the guidance from the Maryland Department of Health and other state/federal agencies. I thank you in advance for your continued support of this policy.

- Please cancel your visit to a community home or campus if you are feeling ill, have traveled to a high risk area, or come into contact with someone who has travelled internationally or to a high risk area in the U.S.
- No off campus or out of home visits with family members. If this does occur you will be required to take your loved one home.
- Non family members are not allowed to enter community homes or the campus.
- Family visits should be coordinated in advance with your Case Manager, Program Coordinator or Administration.
- Family visits are limited to 2 family members and will occur in a designated area of the home or on campus for specified period of time.

In closing I would like to pass along a message I sent to our employees this morning. I cannot say enough about how they have responded to this unprecedented situation. As I say below I am honored and humbled to work with such an amazing group of people.

Please let us know if you have any questions and I will continue to send updates as we receive new/updated information.

*Scott*

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**UPDATE:** *March 17, 2020 3:27 p.m.* Dear Families, First, Happy St. Patrick's Day. We continue to closely monitor the COVID-19 situation and make needed adjustments to our programs. Thankfully, there are no program or policy updates to be announced today. Leadership did participate in a webinar with The Maryland Department of Health this morning and it was reassuring that their recommendations for agencies running congregate living have already been implemented here at Benedictine. What I would like to do is pass along a message I sent to our employees this morning. They have been great during these initial phases of COVID-19 and have adapted quickly to the ever changing recommendations from our state partners. Again, please reach out to your Program Administration if you have any questions.

## **MESSAGE TO EMPLOYEES:**

*Happy St. Patrick's Day! Typically this is a very special day at Benedictine. Sister Jeannette loved St. Patrick's Day and was very proud of her Irish heritage – of course for those that knew her that is an understatement! While today may not be the celebration we had hoped for, it is still a time to remember a very important figure in our history. Sister Jeannette became Directress of the Benedictine School in 1977. For the next 35 years she helped expanded the programs we offer and build new facilities on campus and in our community. She was an amazing fundraiser and visionary. Those of*

*us who were fortunate enough to work under her learned a lot from her leadership and guidance. One thing she always said was “God will Provide”. Of course she usually said this to the board of directors after she had purchased a new house our building and we were not sure where the money would come from! But her words resonate today as we find ourselves in the middle of something none of us have ever experienced before. “God will Provide” all of us the strength we need to see the COVID-19 situation through and we will come out of it stronger because of the challenges we are facing today. “God Will Provide” us the guidance to make the correct decisions in the midst of what seems like chaos. So let us celebrate today in the spirit of Sister Jeannette and know that together we will see this through and “God Will Continue to Provide” for all of us here at Benedictine! Thank you all for your dedication to Benedictine and Happy St. Patrick’s Day!*

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**UPDATE:** *March 16, 2020 3:45 p.m.*

### **COVID-19 Update March 16th**

Dear Families,

The health and safety of the students, adults we support, and employees is Benedictine’s highest priority. This morning Governor Hogan announced new measures to address COVID-19 and we received updated guidance from the CDC over the weekend. Based on the latest information and out of an abundance of

caution we are instituting the following program changes effective March 17, 2020.

## **Visitor Policy**

Given the new guidance we have modified our visitor policy for all program areas:

- Please cancel your visit to a community home or campus if you are feeling ill, have travelled to a high risk area, or come into contact with someone who has travelled internationally or to a high risk area in the U.S.
- No off campus or out of home visits with family members. If this does occur you will be required to take your loved one home.
- Non family members are not allowed to enter community homes or the campus.
- Family visits should be coordinated in advance with your Case Manager, Program Coordinator or Administration.
- Family visits are limited to 2 family member and will occur in a designated area of the home or on campus for specified period of time.

## **Adult Day Programs**

Beginning March 17, 2020 through March 27th all adult day programs will be closed. This includes both our Ridgely Campus and Easton location. We will update the time as we receive new information from our state partners.

## **Adult Residential Program**

Benedictine community homes will remain open. All community plans are cancelled. We will implement the enhanced visitor policy and health monitoring.

## **Person Supports**

Beginning March 17, 2020 through the end of March, Personal Supports will not be provided unless medically necessary.

## **School Residential Program**

The school residential program will continue to operate as outlined in our statement on March 13, 2020. Community plans have been cancelled until further notice.

## **Education Program**

The education program will remain closed until March 27th as communicated in our statement on March 13, 2020. We will continue to update this timeline as new information is received by our state and federal partners.

Benedictine will continue to implement enhanced cleaning for all facilities and health monitoring for the students, adults we support and employees. This includes:

- Wash your hands frequently with an alcohol based hand sanitizer or soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- Temperature checks when warranted
- If an employee is sick in any way they are to stay home
- Continuous cleaning of all facilities and vehicles

We will continue to monitor the situation with COVID-19 and send updates when we receive additional guidance from our state and federal partners. Please check our website [www.benschool.org](http://www.benschool.org) for copies of all our correspondence. If you have specific program related questions please reach out to your program director and/or case manager.

We also understand that at times like this you may want your loved one closer to you. If that is the case please reach out to your program director or case manager to discuss options. Some have asked about funding ramifications if you decided to take your loved one home – please do not worry about that during this time.

I understand this is an extremely trying time for all of us. I would like to thank all of our employees who have stepped up in so many ways over the past week. They have truly lived up to our mission and values and I am extremely proud of how they have met this challenge. This is an unprecedented situation for all of us and please rest assured that Benedictine will continue to focus our efforts on the well-being of our students, adults we support and employees.

Sincerely,

Scott W. Evans

Executive Director

## **STAFF UPDATE:**

Good Afternoon,

The COVID-19 pandemic is evolving rapidly, and confirmed cases in local counties have been announced. While this news is very concerning, we should all remember that most cases are mild with full recovery. Nonetheless, Benedictine is implementing changes to best protect all staff, students and clients and to follow guidance coming from the State and Federal levels.

## **Changes to Adult Day Program**

As communicated on Friday, Benedictine is open and providing modified programming, and staff are expected to report for work. We will continue to modify programs and suspend programming as needed based on guidance from regulatory authorities such as DDA, DHS and MSDE.

- Benedictine will be suspending day programming for Adult clients as of Tuesday, 3/17/2020. This decision has been made due to the community activities that are naturally a part of day programming; the community exposure is one of the

key factors that must be controlled to limit possible exposure to the virus. Additionally, with site based services it is difficult to avoid gatherings of 50 or more which exceeds CDC recommendations.

- Staff working in this area will be offered other work.

### **Assignment to work other than your regular job duties**

Some staff will be directed to alternative work locations or alternative duties as needed based on programmatic changes. Your direct supervisor will provide each individual affected with that direction, should the need arise.

- If you are offered alternate work due to temporary program changes in your department and you refuse the work offered, you can use vacation or personal time for missed time from work.
- If you are assigned to work in a location (group home or residential dorm for example), with a client or student who is being tested for or has a confirmed case of the virus, PPE (personal protective equipment) and safety training will be provided, and a pay supplement will be given.

### **Non-Direct Care staff may be assigned to work remotely**

- Some staff will be able to work from home, if they are in non-direct care positions and are not temporarily reassigned to provide direct care.

## **Preventative health screening questions each shift**

- Benedictine will be instituting health screening checks across all areas by the end of the week. The screening will initially take the form of tracking your answers to the CDC-recommended screening questions related to the following:
  - Your personal health – fever, cough or shortness of breath
  - The health of people you live due to potential exposure from others
  - Your interactions with others outside of your home who potentially have symptoms or are known to have COVID-19 illness
- **REMEMBER!** If you are sick, stay home. Follow your normal call out procedures.
  - There is legislation being voted on to provide additional paid sick leave and additional FMLA protection if your absence is as a result of the Coronavirus outbreak. Benedictine will implement any and all such required supplements.
- If you have had contact with someone who is ill, exhibiting the symptoms of the virus, been diagnosed with the virus, or you have traveled internationally within the last 14 days you

MUST notify your supervisor prior to coming to work, so guidance can be given whether you should report to work or not.

- If you are instructed based on CDC guidelines not to report to work and to self-quarantine for up to 14 days, Benedictine will provide some compensation during this absence.

## **Other health screening measures may be added**

Benedictine may institute taking temperatures as an additional layer of screening staff, students and clients, to help protect everyone from exposure to anyone who is ill with fever.

Routine updates will be provided to staff. At this time, we must be highly responsive to State and Federal requirements for operations and protocols that are being implemented. Benedictine is making every effort to best balance the needs of our staff with the needs of students and clients during every step of this emergency.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank all of you for your efforts over the past week. This is very trying time for all of us, professionally and personally. At times like this I am truly thankful for each of you and your dedication to our mission, values and most importantly to the people in our programs and each other. The community and support network we have here at Benedictine is such a positive force at times like this. Nancy McCloy, the education Director here for years, used to say (and I am paraphrasing) – “This will all be a blessed memory soon!” It was her way of saying we have the strength to get through what is right in front of us, and we will be able to look back on this time and see how we came together to overcome our obstacles and shine as Benedictine always has. Thank you again for everything!

Scott

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# BENEDICTINE SCHOOL

# STATEMENT

**March 13, 2020**

Good Afternoon,

As we stated in our earlier communication Benedictine is committed to the health and safety of our students, adults and staff here on campus and in our community homes. Following the directive of Governor Hogan, The Benedictine School will close our day school program to students from March 16 – March 27.

For those students who receive residential services Benedictine will provide a modified program of activities during normal school hours. We will also modify the residential program taking into account the CDC guidance.

We will continue to implement previously communicated precautions as outline below:

- Continued staff precautions including hygiene recommendations
- If an employee is sick they are to stay home from work; if a student is sick they will either stay at home, or remain in the infirmary
- Deep cleaning of the school building, residential settings, and vehicles
- Daily health monitoring of students and staff

The below precautions will now be implemented beginning Monday, March 16th:

- No non-family visitors will be permitted on campus or group homes
- Family visits must be scheduled in advance with administration or case manager (campus and group homes)
- Off campus visits with families are discouraged and when they do occur will require check in with nursing and administration upon return to campus
- All community based outings into public settings are cancelled
- Encourage remote communication (Facetime, Skype, etc.) when applicable

We will continue to monitor the situation with Coronavirus (COVID-19) in conjunction with our state agencies and local health officials. We will continue to update families daily through e-mail and all correspondence can be found on the main page of our website [www.benschool.org](http://www.benschool.org) beginning Monday, March 16th.

We appreciate the continued conversations and collaboration in dealing with this very unique situation. We are grateful for your support and cooperation.

Julie Hickey

Scott W. Evans

Education Director

Executive Director

# BENEDICTINE ADULT

# SERVICES STATEMENT

Over the past weeks Benedictine leadership has monitored the evolving concerns around COVID-19 in Maryland on a daily basis. We have met regularly and instituted best practice agency wide and in our day and residential services for hygiene and infection control as a safeguard for the health and wellness of the people we support and our staff. We have also taken initial steps to prepare for the possibility that the virus has a more direct impact on the Eastern Shore.

Yesterday, following the Governors Press Conference, we received additional guidance from The Developmental Disabilities Administration. In reviewing that document, we are reassured that we have already instituted many of the recommendations as listed below:

1. Updated our emergency planning procedures.
2. Established communication with key health care and emergency officials locally.
3. Communication with staff regarding signs and symptoms, specific expectations around personal hygiene and environmental cleanliness, and reinforcing the need to stay home if sick and seek medical care.
4. Enhanced cleaning and disinfecting protocols on campus and in the homes.
5. Stocking and maintaining inventory on Personal Protective Equipment.
6. Nurses have worked with our pharmacy to get increased medication and personal supplies.
7. Sought the guidance of medical professionals regarding non-critical medical care.

Based on the guidance document, we are also instituting the following precautions:

1. Residential weekend plans involving public places where numbers of people gather (dining out, movies) will be switched to home based activities.
2. Benedictine will suspend using our contract public transportation provider on weekdays and utilize our own staff and vehicles to bring people to day services.
3. Suspend community based volunteer and personal enrichment activities in favor of site based services.
4. Evaluate community employment and risk with each person, their family, and the advice of health care professionals. Make every effort with work with employers to maintain jobs for the future.
5. Continue day services in Ridgely and Easton unless otherwise recommended.
6. Instituted Visitor restrictions at day services and in homes.
  1. No non family visitors in day services or group homes.
  2. Family visits should be scheduled in advance with Program Coordinator (day services or group homes)
  3. Encourage remote communication as an alternative to in person visits.

Benedictine will continue to monitor the situation with COVID-19 in conjunction with state agencies and local health officials. We will provide updates daily

through email beginning Monday, March 16, 2020. All correspondence can also be found on the main page of our website [www.benschool.org](http://www.benschool.org).

We appreciate continued conversations as we navigate these unique circumstances. Thank you for your support and cooperation.

Beth Mathis

Scott Evans

Adult Services Director  
Director

Executive

Benedictine will continue to monitor the situation with COVID-19 in conjunction with state agencies and local health officials. We will provide updates daily through email beginning Monday, March 16, 2020. All correspondence can also be found on the main page of our website [www.benschool.org](http://www.benschool.org).

We appreciate continued conversations as we navigate these unique circumstances. Thank you for your support and cooperation.

Beth Mathis

Scott Evans

Adult Services Director  
Director

Executive

## **BENEDICTINE STAFF STATEMENT:**

Good Afternoon, With the governor's announcement of state-wide school closures, Benedictine understands that there will be an effect on our current staffing levels. Following the state directives and information from our various licensing agencies, Benedictine will be modifying our day programming. Immediate actions include the following:

1. The Benedictine School will close day school program to students from March 16 – March 27. The residential programming will remain in operations for the continuity of care for the students residing in our facilities. School day staff are expected to report for regularly scheduled shifts for modified programming.

2. Until further notice, Benedictine adult programming will cancel community activities and bring people supported to campus. They are evaluating community employment on a case by case basis. The residential programming will remain in operations for the continuity of care for the students residing in our facilities. All day program staff are expected to report for regularly scheduled shifts for modified programming.

Across all programs, the following steps are being implemented to help protect our population and staff:

1. Continued staff precautions including hygiene recommendations and remaining home if sick
2. No non-family client/student visitors will be permitted on campus or at group homes
3. Family visits must be scheduled in advance with administration or case manager or coordinator
4. Off campus visits with families are discouraged and when they do occur will require check in with nursing and administration upon return to campus
5. All community-based outings into public settings are cancelled
6. All scheduled training is postponed until further notice

As an employer, we are obligated to provide a workplace that is safe and free of hazards for our employees. That includes ensuring that an employee who is sick is not allowed to work, when doing so endangers the health of co-workers and others they come in contact with.

You may use the information below as a guide for direction during this time of increased medical vigilance.

### **Child care, elder care, or other circumstances may prevent staff from reporting to work who are otherwise able to**

- If a staff member is prevented from reporting to work, standard sick, vacation, and personal time may be used. Benedictine will apply liberal guidelines in how staff use sick leave through the immediate future. For example, a doctor's note will not be required to return to duty, and sick leave may be used for reasons other than illness such as family care during the school closure.
- Benedictine encourages staff families to lend assistance to each other during this time of increased need.
- If no other childcare solution can be found, inform your department leadership. Alternate arrangements may be available depending on the amount of need.

### **For an employee who is clearly ill or under the weather.**

- The employee will be required to leave work, for their own health and the health of others. We strongly encourage you to contract your health care provider.

**Will Benedictine pay an employee for missed time if *Benedictine* sends them home due to illness?**

- At this time, we are following our standard Sick and Safe leave policy. Employees will not be paid automatically, but can use any other accrual time off to cover their missed time.

**If an employee is not ill, but they self-report that they have traveled overseas or that a friend/relative/someone they have had contact with in the past 14 days is being tested or has been diagnosed with the virus, what is the employee required to do?**

- If the employee has traveled to high risk areas, this **must be reported** to the Director of Compliance or the Director of HR. We will need to know where the employee traveled and when the travel occurred to determine the appropriate course of action.
- If the employee has traveled internationally but with an end destination not in a high risk area, the Director of Compliance or the Director of HR **must be notified**. We will need to know where the employee traveled including through which airports/countries en route, and dates of travel.
- If the employee has had contact with anyone diagnosed or undergoing testing, or has had contact with others exposed to someone diagnosed, this **must be reported** to the Director of Compliance or the Director of HR. The employee will be

directed to contact their health care provider, and Benedictine will take any other appropriate actions.

We will continue to monitor the situation with Coronavirus (COVID-19) in conjunction with our state agencies. We appreciate the continued conversations and collaboration in dealing with this very unique and fluid situation. We are grateful for your dedication to our mission and values.

I have also attached two external communications that have been sent to families of our students and people supported in our adult programs. On Monday, we will begin posting any updates regarding our operations to the main page of [Benschool.org](http://Benschool.org).