



# THE JOHN CARROLL SCHOOL

## Transcript of Reopening Plan: Mental Health Video – Recorded July 21, 2020

Dean of Student Services and Director of Counseling Larry Hensley:

Good afternoon! I'd like to say hello to both our returning Patriots as well as all of our new students and families who will be joining us for the start of a brand new, unique school year! My name is Larry Hensley, and I am the Dean of Student Services and Director of Counseling here at John Carroll.

I'm going to spend a little time today letting you know about some of the steps we are taking to support not just the physical health of our students this school year, but also their emotional and mental health needs.

First, I want to give a special thank you to Dr. Eileen Starr, a licensed clinical social worker who works in the College of Professional Studies at the Metropolitan State University of Denver and has agreed to serve as our Counseling and Mental Health liaison for the John Carroll School Reopening Task Force.

Next, I want to assure you that we are taking the mental health of our students very seriously during this unprecedented time. We know that our newest Patriots may be particularly impacted, and have already taken steps to assist in easing their transition to a new school in the midst of a pandemic. By now, freshmen and transfer families should have received an email from me and our Director of Parent Relations regarding our expanded mentor program. I know you will love the veteran JC parents and students we have paired you with to support you through the transition and beyond.

Both new and returning students will still be able to take advantage of our College and School Counseling services, with the following safety precautions in place. Only one student will be allowed in a counselor's office at a time, with a face mask, and must sit safely distanced from the counselor. Desks and other touch points will be cleaned between meetings.

Outside of these logistics, we are responding to a number of expected student reactions by developing and sharing various coping strategies. We know that students thrive on routine, structure and open communication and we will be sure to listen to them. We also know that physical distancing may be challenging, so we are committed to clearly explaining the risks and the benefits of being back to school in-person while enforcing all of our safety protocols.

We also know it may be a struggle for students to wear a face mask continuously throughout the day, and are preparing for these reactions as well as many others, including:

- Family and external stressors affecting each of our students
- Anxiety issues
- Indecisiveness over attending school in-person versus distance learning
- The stages of grief caused by the virus (denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance).
- Anxieties about being on campus and the virus, as well as struggles with the adjustment of being back to school with new guidelines, policies and procedures.

To help our students, we are planning a variety of strategies including:

- Providing daily support groups
- Providing mental health breaks as needed
- Offering individual counseling sessions
- Implementing mindfulness, meditation and creative calmness throughout our daily schedule
- Providing various outlets of healthy expressions

We are all here to support our students in any way we can. If you have any specific concerns or suggestions I encourage you to reach out to the counselors or myself. If I haven't yet met you, I look forward to doing so, and to working with all of our Patriots to make sure that we make the most of what is sure to be another memorable year at The John Carroll School! Thank you, and have a wonderful summer.