

# COVID-19 School FAQ



## Frequently Asked Questions for School Administrators and Teachers

### **What is the difference between isolation and quarantine?**

[Isolation](#) is for people who are COVID positive. It separates people who are infected with the virus from people who are not infected. It usually lasts 10 days.

[Quarantine](#) is for people who are well but are exposed to someone who might have been infected. It keeps someone who might have been infected with the virus away from others. It lasts 14 days since the last possible exposure.

### **How long must a teacher or staff person be out of school if they test positive for COVID-19?**

A teacher or staff person that tests positive for COVID-19 should isolate at home. The teacher or staff person may return to school after 24 hours with no fever **and** respiratory symptoms have improved (e.g. cough, shortness of breath) **and** 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/end-home-isolation.html>

### **How long must a student, teacher or staff person be out of school if they have a family member in the same house as them that tests positive for COVID-19?**

A student, teacher or staff person that lives in the same house as someone who tests positive for COVID-19 must remain out of school the entire time the family member is in isolation (typically 10 days) plus 14 additional days of quarantine. The total time out of school would be at least 24 days.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/quarantine.html>

### **If a person tests positive but does not have symptoms, can they work from home?**

Yes, if the school has a system in place for working from home this is encouraged. An employee with mild symptoms should be able to work from home as well.

**If a teacher or staff member has a household member that tests positive but does not have symptoms, can the teacher or staff member come to work anyway and monitor for symptoms?** No, asymptomatic people who test positive can still spread the virus. A teacher or staff member that has a household member that tests positive and is considered a close contact must quarantine during the household member's isolation period and 14 days after the isolation period ends.

Questions?

Contact the Health Department of Northwest Michigan at 1-800-386-5959

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**Must we close a classroom if a person with COVID-19 attended class in that classroom? If so, for how long?**

Yes, the classroom should be closed, cleaned, and disinfected. It is recommended to close off the area for at least 24 hours. If that is not feasible, wait as long as possible and then clean and disinfect the classroom following CDC guidance. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>.

**If a teacher or staff person was in a classroom full of children, and that teacher later finds out that they have COVID-19 while they were in the classroom, must all the class be quarantined, or only those children who were within 6 feet of the teacher for 15 minutes or more?**

The entire class must be quarantined and monitor for COVID-19-related symptoms.

**If the teacher was wearing a cloth mask in the classroom, and that teacher later finds out that they have COVID-19 while they were in the classroom, do the children still have to be quarantined?**

Yes, the children who were in the classroom are still considered close contacts and must quarantine for 14 days and monitor for symptoms.

**Does a sibling of a child in quarantine have to be quarantined?**

No, if the sibling was not a direct contact of a person who tested positive for COVID-19, then they should monitor for symptoms and can continue attending school.

**If a student has an illness that is not COVID-19, like a cold, does that child still have to be out of school until they are 24 hours fever free?**

If the student is experiencing any COVID-19-related symptoms, they might have COVID-19 and they should not attend school. They should contact their regular medical provider and get tested for COVID-19 or be cleared by the health care provider to return to school.

If they test negative for COVID-19, then they can return after 24 hours.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html>

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**Does the school have to inform the families of students when a child is excluded from school because of COVID-19, or does the Health Department do that?**

The school is responsible for communication to families of students. However, the Health Department can provide guidance as needed.

**How many children have to be sick with COVID-19 before a school closes?**

The Health Department will work closely with School Administration recognizing there are many factors to be considered when closing a school.

**Does a teacher, staff person, or student have to retest for COVID-19 after testing positive before they are allowed back to school?**

No, the teacher, staff person or student who tested positive can return to school after return to school after 24 hours with no fever and significant improvement in symptoms **and** 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared.

The health department does not recommend a retest. Sometimes a person will continue to test positive even though they are no longer infectious.

**How can we know when a person is no longer infectious?**

The general timeline is 10 days since symptoms first appeared.

**If a student changes classes and is with many different students during the day rather than just one classroom of students, and that student tests positive, do all those students have to quarantine?**

Yes, this is one reason it is wise to keep students in small cohorts.

**Should all students get tested for COVID-19 prior to starting school?**

No, the COVID-19 test only indicates the presence of the virus the moment the test is taken.

**If a student teacher or staff are told they are a close contact of a positive case and they get a COVID-19 test that is negative are they released from quarantine?**

No, a person can become COVID-19 positive any time during quarantine (the 14 days after the exposure).

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**Should students get an anti-body test to prove that they have already had COVID-19 and thus do not need to quarantine if they are exposed again?**

No, students who have already tested positive for COVID-19 will need to quarantine again. We are still learning about the virus and there is a possibility of reinfection.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/quarantine.html>

**If a student or teacher already had a proven case of COVID-19 and then has an exposure in school, do they have to quarantine anyway?**

Yes, students or teachers with proven cases of COVID-19 will still need to quarantine. We are still learning about the virus and there is a possibility of reinfection.

**Does the school have to tell families which child tested positive for COVID-19? Isn't that a violation of HIPAA?**

The identity of the child or teacher should be protected as much as possible. Close contacts will be contacted and only given information related to their exposure. The name of the COVID-19 student or teacher will be shared on a need to know basis only.

**Will children who are at the highest risk for complications, such as children with severe respiratory problems, be required to stay out of the school classroom until this pandemic is over?**

The decision to send a child to school or not will be made jointly by the parent and school with guidance from the child's medical provider.

**What if a staff member/student goes out of state?**

There are no current restrictions for staff members or students who travel out of state. However, everyone should assume COVID-19 exposure and monitor for symptoms.

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## School FAQ



### **How do we keep teachers safe when congregating in common spaces such as break rooms, mail rooms, etc.**

Teachers should wear a mask, social distance, and frequently wash hands. Prevent congregating to the fullest extent possible. Allow for one person in a mail room at a time. Break rooms should have capacity limits based on appropriate spacing. Masks should be worn when more than one person is present. Only have as many chairs as allowed people in a room.

### **What do we do when a child tests positive for COVID-19?**

All schools must cooperate with the local public health department if a confirmed case of COVID-19 is identified. The school must collect the contact information for any close contacts of the affected individual from two days before he or she showed symptoms to the time when he or she was last present at the school.

- *Will contacts be excluded/quarantined?*
  - Close contacts are placed into 14-day quarantine based on their last exposure.
- *What is a close contact?*
  - For COVID-19, a close contact is most often someone that has been within 6 feet (about 2 arms' length) of an infected person for at least 15 minutes, with or without a face covering. This can be a cumulative time throughout the day.
- *Who are contacts to close contacts?*
  - Close contacts are individuals exposed but not yet known to be infected. The contacts to these individuals do not need to be in quarantine and do not need to be identified or contacted.

### **What qualifies as an exposure in school?**

Several factors are involved before concluding an exposure occurred in school. The spread of COVID-19 is reduced by wearing face coverings, avoiding large crowded groups, and staying more than 6 feet apart from each other. Frequent hand washing and not touching our face reduce chance of exposure.

### **If a principal brings a kindergartner to his office for a behavior issue and a 4th grader later etc., and one of them later tests positive, won't I be potentially exposing several students?**

All students should wear a mask and practice social distancing. Cleaning high touch surfaces such as the doorknobs or the chair the child sat in will reduce the risk of spread – length of time makes an impact to this as well. If child #1 was positive, child #2 would not be considered a close contact in this scenario nor at any higher risk than another child in the school (outside the positive child's classroom).

### **How do we address parents who refuse to have children wear mask?**

Schools should enforce compliance with state and local requirements for students through their normal disciplinary mechanisms. Continued refusal or issues should be moved to 100% remote learning as allowed by school policy and applicable law. Cloth face coverings can reduce the change of spreading COVID-19 greatly. Follow guidelines in [Michigan's 2020-2021 Return to School Roadmap](#).

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**Do we need to have plexiglass in between students and cafeteria staff? Would face masks, gloves, and face shields be enough? (recommended in both phase 4 and 5).**

Please refer to the [Michigan Return to School Roadmap](#) which states barrier protection must be used.

**If vegetables and fruit were individually wrapped in bags or plastic wrap, could students reach in and grab them themselves, or do they need to be handed out to them?**

Most ideal is one gloved and masked person handing out to others. This gets to the education on highest risk vs. lowest risk spectrum and doing what they can but recognizing that sometime barriers and limitations will occur.

**Are students able to grab their own juice and milk boxes from large bins or coolers?**

See above response.

**If a parent calls to report sick child with an influenza like illness (ILI) or COVID-19 symptoms, or if our school identifies child with ILI/COVID-19 symptoms what should we do?**

Refer to the [School Toolkit](#) for additional guidance. The safest precautions are for:

- Those with confirmed or probable COVID, keep out of school until it has been at least 10 days from the first day they had symptoms AND they have had 24 hours with no fever and have improving symptoms. There is no need to get a negative test or a doctor's note to clear the child or staff to return to school if they meet these criteria."
- Children with fever or other symptoms without known exposure or significant community transmission do not need a negative test or 10 days to return – need to refer to the school toolkit handouts on this topic.

**What do we do when a student has COVID-19 symptoms?**

Ensure anyone with symptoms has a mask on and separate them from others as soon as possible. It is strongly recommended to have a quarantine area where a student can be alone until they can be picked up. Open window if possible.

**If a 5th grade student is COVID-19 positive and his brother is in 2nd grade, who gets quarantined?**

The 5th grader is isolated and his brother the 2nd grader would be a close contact and quarantined so they should be excluded from school for 14 days. Also, close contacts of the 5th grader in their class, but not close contacts of the 2nd grader unless the 2nd grader has symptoms or a positive test. We isolate sick people, we quarantine contacts

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## **Who is completing the mental health screening for the schools?**

The Health Department is working to develop guidance with Char-EM ISD, Alcona Health Center and Community Mental Health therapists. Ultimately, districts that chose to implement mental health screenings will have a district staff person at each school that will facilitate the screening.

## **Are daily health screenings required?**

Yes, [Executive Order 2020-161](#) requires all businesses or operations with employees reporting to work in-person must conduct daily entry self-screening protocol for all employees or contractors entering the workplace. It is up to the employer to determine how the screening is completed.

## **Can we get COVID-19 testing at our schools?**

At this time we are unable to do testing at individual schools.

## **If a teacher is getting tested today due to possible COVID-19 exposure but they were with another staff member after the possible exposure what should they do?**

No further action necessary unless the teacher has a positive test result.

## **Where can we find signs and posters to put around our school?**

There are a variety of resources available for school use on our website - [www.nwhealth.org/covidkids](http://www.nwhealth.org/covidkids)

## **Is there a universal opt-out form for not wearing a mask?**

No, cloth face coverings should be encouraged, unless it is not medically tolerated.

## **Sports-Questions to ask:**

- Are they able to maintain 6 ft. distance?
- Are all teammates contacts?
- Are teams quarantined?
- [Follow MHSAA guidelines](#)

## **Regular water intake is important for students. How can we keep them safe, and what is recommended for water fountains?**

A water bottle filling station is a high touch surface that needs to be cleaned throughout the day. Hand sanitizer should be used by student before and after using station. There is a drinking fountain lockout device that may help to decrease the spread of germs in schools. The device is called [Drinking Fountain Lockout kit](#).

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