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**COVID-19 FAQ for
Schools 2021-2022
Prek-12th Grade**

Westchester County Department of Health (WCDOH)

Q1: When and how should we report positive COVID-19 cases to WCDOH?

A: Schools must report to the WCDOH school team all positive COVID-19 cases in students, teachers, staff, or anyone who may have exposed others in the school setting by completing and electronically submitting the WCDOH reporting form that has been provided to the schools.

The report should list close contacts from the classroom, bus, sports, and extracurricular activities, *regardless of vaccination status*. The schools must notify WCDOH as soon as the following information is available: name, date of birth, phone number and address of case or parent/guardian (information about whether or not a case is a Westchester resident is essential for appropriate follow up).

Q2. Are schools responsible for contact tracing for students, faculty and staff?

A. While WCDOH has the primary responsibility for contact tracing, effective contact tracing is a joint collaborative effort. WCDOH will need the assistance of schools in providing staff, student lists, schedules and other information to identify exposed individuals. Schools are responsible for identifying and notifying exposed individuals (close contacts) - parents, guardians, teachers, staff - as soon as possible following the identification of a COVID-19 case, and if relevant, excluding individuals until cleared by WCDOH to return to school or work. WCDOH is responsible for contacting and interviewing COVID-19 cases and exposed individuals, verifying relevant information, and issuing isolation or quarantine orders and isolation or quarantine releases when indicated.

A *case* is the term used for a person who meets the clinical symptoms definition or tests positive for COVID-19. A *contact* is the term used for those who may have been exposed to the case. A case is put into *isolation*. A contact is put into *quarantine*. Schools must exclude all individuals under either isolation or quarantine orders from attending or working at the school.

Q3. Will contact tracers release the name of the positive individual to their contacts?

A. No. Contact tracers will tell potentially infected persons that they were exposed – they will not disclose the identity of the person to whom they were exposed.

Q4. What is the criteria for a close contact or an exposure to a COVID-19 case in a school setting?

A. A **student in an indoor classroom setting**, if both the infected student and exposed students correctly and consistently wore well-fitting masks for the duration of the exposure, is considered a close contact **only** if the students are within **3 feet** of a COVID-19 case for a cumulative total of **15 minutes or more within a 24 hour period** during the 2 full days prior to the case's illness onset or lab positive specimen collection date if asymptomatic. **This 3 feet exception does not apply to teachers, staff, or other adults or non-classroom settings.**

For teachers, staff, and other adults, a close contact or exposed person is anyone who was within 6 feet of a COVID-19 case for a **cumulative total of 15 minutes or more within a 24 hour period** during the 2 full days prior to the case's illness onset or lab positive specimen collection date if asymptomatic, through the last date the COVID-19 case was in school or participated in any school activity, regardless of whether the contact was wearing a mask or whether the exposure was outdoors, or vaccinated.

During meals, snacks, chorus, band, orchestra and bus rides, where masking cannot or may not be maintained or monitored, all individuals meeting the above 6 feet, 15 minutes criteria are considered exposed. Social distancing remains important to avoid exposure. Assigned seating should be used whenever possible to limit the number of individuals who are considered exposed, excluded and subject to quarantine. In the absence of such seating or specific information, all students in the room, bus, or activity etc. may be considered exposed.

WCDOH will routinely review all bus, athletic, and outdoor exposures with schools on a case by case basis to identify exposed individuals.

Outdoor activities and athletics - COVID transmission or spread does occur in outdoors settings, thus maintaining social distancing and masks continue to be vital COVID prevention measures. Because masking cannot or may not be maintained or monitored in these settings, the above 6 foot 15 minute criteria applies to all such settings with the following exception:

During sports at higher risk of COVID transmission, COVID transmission has been reported with less than 15 minutes exposure and thus the 15 minute minimum exposure time may not apply.

The decision tree for identifying COVID-19 Close Contacts in K-12 Schools may be helpful in understanding who is a contact: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/docs/close-contact-decision-tree.pdf>

Q5. Who must be excluded from school and is subject to quarantine? How does vaccination status affect quarantine?

A. Any **unvaccinated individuals** meeting the 6 feet (or 3 feet exception for students in classroom setting) criteria must be excluded and will be subject to quarantine by the WCDOH for a minimum of 10 days following their most recent exposure to a COVID-19 case.

Fully vaccinated individuals meeting the close contact or exposure criteria may continue to work or attend school if the individual's vaccination status has been verified e.g. in the NYS Immunization Registry (NYSIIS), which all schools should have access to, AND **the individual has no symptoms**. These individuals must be reported to WCDOH on the Excel case-contact listing template with the individual's vaccination status. Vaccinated individuals will receive a wellness call from the WCDOH. Individuals for whom full vaccination or lack of symptoms cannot be confirmed must be excluded and will be subject to the same 10 day minimum quarantine as unvaccinated individuals.

Note: An individual is considered *fully vaccinated* if it is more than 2 weeks after they have received the second dose in a 2-dose series (Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna), or more than 2 weeks after they have received a single-dose vaccine (Johnson & Johnson [J&J]/Janssen))

WCDOH issued quarantine or isolation orders supersede any clearance communications from medical providers.

Q6. What resources will an isolating or quarantined person require?

A. An isolating or quarantined person will need access to a private room and a private bathroom. Individuals will also need access to food, medications and other essential items that will allow them to remain in quarantine. People who need assistance during quarantine or isolation can call **866-588-0195**.

Q7. When should an exposed individual get tested for COVID-19? Can an unvaccinated person test out of quarantine?

A. Symptomatic individuals, whether vaccinated or not, should be tested as soon as symptoms appear and should quarantine. Asymptomatic individuals should be tested approximately 3-5 days after exposure. Any person testing positive must isolate, and will be issued an isolation order for a minimum of 10 days

An exposed unvaccinated individual, even one who tests negative, must continue to be excluded and quarantine for a minimum of 10 days and until released by WCDOH.

An exposed fully vaccinated individual who has no symptoms and tests negative will no longer be required to mask while in public settings outside of school.

Q8. Where can students, faculty and staff get tested for COVID-19?

A. A list of testing sites can be found on the WCDOH health website (<https://health.westchestergov.com/2019-novel-coronavirus>) under the “Testing, Results and Treatment” tab or by going to the Find a Test Site Near You webpage: (<https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/find-test-site-near-you>). Students, faculty and staff can also call the NYS COVID-19 hotline at 1-888-364-3065 for assistance locating a testing site.

Q9. Is there a charge for COVID-19 tests?

There is no out of pocket charge for COVID-19 tests due to an exposure or because of symptoms (Insurance information may be requested). Insurance and/or out of pocket costs may be required for other types of testing.

Q10. When can a person who has tested positive return to school? Is it the same process for students, faculty and staff?

A. Any individual who tests positive for COVID-19, regardless of vaccination status or symptoms, must be excluded and isolate for a minimum of 10 days and until they receive a release from isolation communication from WCDOH. WCDOH monitors COVID-19 positive individuals, and will determine when they meet criteria for release from isolation, and issue such a release.

Q11. Must individuals with symptoms compatible with COVID-19 be sent home or excluded? When can such individuals return to school?

A. As per the NYSDOH 2021-22 Interim PreK-12 (9-2-21) guidance and NYS Health Commissioner Determination on Testing or Vaccination, all students, teachers, and staff with new or worsening symptoms compatible with COVID-19 must be sent home and excluded from school, regardless of vaccination status, until the following criteria are met:

- Documentation of a negative COVID-19 PCR or NAAT test result
- OR
- Medical provider documentation of a pre-existing chronic condition with no change in symptoms or an alternate acute illness diagnosis e.g. lab confirmed strep throat, flu AND that COVID-19 is not suspected
 - All must meet the preceding criteria AND be fever free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medications and have improving symptoms

Anyone not meeting the above criteria must remain excluded for a minimum of 10 days following the date of first symptoms.

Q12. Can we assume that students with antibodies are safe from contracting COVID-19?

A. No, we do not have enough information about whether antibodies protect individuals from re-infection and how long antibodies may provide protection. **Antibody tests also CANNOT diagnose if an individual has active infectious COVID-19.** A positive result can mean you had infection with COVID-19 in the past. A different test would be needed to determine active infection.

Q13. Are rapid tests (Antigen or Molecular) reliable?

A. Rapid tests provide results in under an hour, though they have a high rate of false negatives. Negative rapid antigen tests, which are the most commonly performed rapid COVID-19 test, cannot rule out COVID-19 and should be followed up by a molecular (PCR) test.

Q14. Are there any requirements for quarantine following travel?

A. New York State does not have any current domestic travel restrictions. It is recommended that all travelers, domestic and international, should continue to follow all CDC travel requirements. These recommendations include testing and self-quarantining following travel for unvaccinated individuals (especially international travel). (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/travel-during-covid19.html>)

Q15. Can you leave quarantine for a Covid-19 test or does your quarantine start all over after you went out to get that test?

A. Yes, you can leave quarantine for a COVID-19 test. **However, during travel to and from testing you should minimize contact with others, wear a mask/face covering, observe distancing and utilize private means for transportation.** No, your quarantine period does not re-start. However, even if you test negative, you must continue to quarantine for the full 10 days from the last exposure to a COVID-19 positive individual.

Q16. How do those testing positive at sites or who live outside of Westchester County or NYS integrate into the NYSDOH systems?

A. Lab reports from ‘out of jurisdiction’ are transferred and reported to the state/county of residence (of record) of the individual. So for instance, if a Westchester County resident tests at a location in Connecticut, that lab result is reported to the Connecticut Department of Health, who transfers it to New York State Department of Health, and subsequently the Westchester County Department of Health. (Note: please make sure your current phone and address are correct at a testing location, so the results can be reported to the correct jurisdiction and the local health department can follow up with communication). NYSDOH obtains lab reports on individuals who do not live (but work) in WestchesterCounty and provides these to WCDOH.

QUESTIONS RELATED TO HOUSEHOLD CONTACTS:

Q17. If a child tests positive and has an unvaccinated sibling in the school, should the school keep the unvaccinated sibling out of school?

A. Yes, unless the unvaccinated sibling resides in a separate household, the unvaccinated sibling must be placed under quarantine which would mean that the unvaccinated sibling should not attend school during the required period for quarantine.

Q18. If a student/staff member is home on quarantine and then develops symptoms, please explain how that impacts attendance to school/work and what it means for the unvaccinated sibling that may have been continuing to go to school.

A. If a student or staff tests positive, their household members will likely be considered close contacts and will need to quarantine. Students or staff testing positive will require isolation for a minimum of 10 days.

Q19. How long does someone have to quarantine if they have a family member in isolation?

A. Determining quarantine periods can vary depending on the particular situation; the specifics will be determined in conversation with the Department of Health case investigators and contact tracers. Here are some sample scenarios. **These are only examples, they do not cover every circumstance.**

Scenario 1: Close contact with someone who has COVID-19—will not have further close contact

I had close contact with someone who has COVID-19 and will not have further contact or interactions with the person while they are sick (e.g., co-worker, neighbor, or friend).

Your last day of quarantine is 10 days from the date you had close contact. You can leave your home and return to school/work the following day (Day 12 in the example).

Date of last close contact with person who has COVID-19 + 10 days= end of quarantine

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
Last close contact with person who has COVID-19	.....	.....	1	2	3	4	5
	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
	27	28	29	30	31		

Last day of quarantine

Quarantine ends at 11:59 pm on the last day.

Scenario 2: Close contact with someone who has COVID-19—live with the person but can avoid further close contact

I live with someone who has COVID-19 (e.g., roommate, partner, family member), and that person has isolated by staying in a separate bedroom. I have had no close contact with the person since they isolated. Your last day of quarantine is 10 days from when the person with COVID-19 began home isolation. You can leave your home and return to school/work the following day (Day 12 in the example).

Date person with COVID-19 began home isolation + 10 days = end of quarantine

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
Person with COVID-19 starts home isolation	.....	.....	1	2	3	4	5
	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
	27	28	29	30	31		

Last day of quarantine

Quarantine ends at 11:59 pm on the last day

Scenario 3. Under quarantine and had additional close contact with someone who has COVID-19

I live with someone who has COVID-19 and started my 10-day quarantine period because we had close contact. What if I ended up having close contact with the person who is sick during my quarantine? What if another household member gets sick with COVID-19? Do I need to restart my quarantine?

Yes. You will have to restart your quarantine from the last day you had close contact with anyone in your house who has COVID-19. Any time a new household member gets sick with COVID-19 and you had close contact, you will need to restart your quarantine. . You can leave your home and return to school/work the following day (Day 16 in the example).

Date of additional close contact with person who has COVID-19 + 10 days = end of quarantine

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
Start of first quarantine	.....	.....	1	2	3	4	5
	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
	27	28	29	30	31		

Additional contact or someone else got sick; quarantine starts over

Last day of quarantine

Quarantine ends at 11:59 pm on the last day

Scenario 4: Live with someone who has COVID-19 and cannot avoid continued close contact

I live in a household where I cannot avoid close contact with the person who has COVID-19. I am providing direct care to the person who is sick, don't have a separate bedroom to isolate the person who is sick, or live in close quarters where I am unable to keep a physical distance of 6 feet.

You should avoid contact with others outside the home while the person is sick, and quarantine for 10 days after the person who has COVID-19 meets the criteria to end home isolation. You can leave your home and return to school/work the following day (Day 20 in the example).

Date the person with COVID-19 ends home isolation + 10 days = end of quarantine

Person is sick/has COVID-19	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
	30	31	1	2	3	4	5
Criteria met to end home isolation	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
	27	28	29	30	31		

Quarantine ends at 11:59 pm on the last day

Q21. Does the student have to quarantine if the parent was exposed and is quarantining, but does not have symptoms?

A. If a member of the household is quarantining because of either a known exposure to a COVID-19 positive individual or because of travelling, other members of the household can leave the home if that person can quarantine properly from the household members. A quarantined person should:

- Separate themselves from other members of the household
- Use a separate bedroom and bathroom
- Not share linens, towels, eating utensils, cups and plates
- Limit time in common household areas, such as kitchens.

Q22. What is the timeframe for contract tracing? Will you work with the school immediately? What if we are notified in the evening and siblings may be at school in am?

A. WCDOH will notify relevant school staff upon learning of a positive test for COVID-19 at the school. WCDOH also verifies that individuals reporting a positive COVID test have a positive lab test result in order to proceed with further measures. Labs are required to report to New York State Department of Health any positive test results immediately, and local health departments aim to contact positive individuals within 24 hours of receiving that lab report. The contact tracing efforts are also assisted greatly by everyone answering the phone when the Department of Health calls. Contact tracing calls will come from the phone "NYS Contact Tracing" (518-387-9993)

This FAQ is based CDC and New York State guidance including the following:

School Guidance:

- CDC Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools (updated Aug 6, 2021): <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html#vaccination>
- New York State Department of Education Health and Safety Guide for the 2021-2022 School Year (August 2021): <http://www.nysed.gov/common/nysed/files/programs/back-school/nysed-health-and-safety-guide-for-the-2021-2022-school-year.pdf>
- New York State Department of Health 2021-22 Interim PreK-12 School Guidance (9/2/21): https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2021/09/school-guidance_0.pdf

Masking Guidance:

- Emergency Regulation (effective 8/27/21):
https://regs.health.ny.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/emergency_regulations/Face%20Coverings%20for%20COVID%2019%20Prevention.pdf
- NYS Health Commissioner Determination on Masking (8/27/21):
https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2021/08/2.61_determination_0.pdf

COVID-19 Reporting, Testing or Vaccination Guidance

- Emergency Regulation (effective 9/2/21):
https://regs.health.ny.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/emergency_regulations/COVID-19%20Reporting%20and%20Testing.pdf
- NYS Health Commissioner Determination on Testing or Vaccination (9/2/21):
<https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2021/09/2.62-determination.pdf>