

Interim Guidance on Management of COVID-19 Cases in PreK-12 Schools

COVID-19 Reporting to CDPH

Under [Public Health Order No. 2020-2](#), schools must report to CDPH clusters of 2 or more cases of COVID-19 occurring within 14 calendar days of each other within 24 hours of identifying the cluster. **In order to reduce COVID-19 transmission in schools and ensure efficient case investigation and contact tracing, our interim guidance encourages CDPH notification for every case.**

Each case of COVID-19 in any PreK-12 school should prompt a contact to the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH). Clear guidance should be provided to parents about acceptable methods of reporting COVID-19 lab results or diagnosis to the school as soon as possible. Schools should reinforce that children be kept out of school pending the results of COVID-19 testing for any reason.

EVERY case in a student or staff member should be reported through the confidential CDPH COVID-19 Online Case Report Form: <http://redcap.link/chicovidreport> (select option 2 “Community congregate setting: single case or cluster of 2 or more cases”).

In order to complete the form, you will need the following information:

- Total number of classrooms/cohorts impacted
- Total number of students thought to be exposed
- Total number of staff thought to be exposed
- The positive individual’s reported or observed symptom onset date
- The positive individual’s last date at school
- Additional optional information includes method of notification, test date (if known), testing provider (if known).

During periods of sustained COVID-19 community spread, transmission outside of school may be as likely as transmission within school. Messaging to parents and families around safe COVID-19 practices and precautions outside of school to protect school cohorts and education as an essential service are critical for your school community. Multiple cases may be identified among members who attend the same school, but this will not always constitute a school outbreak, or indicate transmission within the school setting. For example, cases that occur in different time frames (at least calendar 15 days apart), in separate locations, and/or having no common source of exposure would not constitute an outbreak.

If your school has 2 or more cases (apart from household members) that involve 2 or more different cohorts or classrooms, call 311 and ask to speak to the medical director on-call to discuss management.

School Contact Tracing

Given your access to staff and student records, the need for prompt notification to close contacts, and the relationship you have with your staff and families, your school is best positioned to conduct initial contact tracing (identification of contacts) and notification. Support from CDPH can be requested by emailing coronavirus@chicago.gov, but the below should be completed as soon as possible. CDPH will conduct additional follow-up with staff close contacts and families of student close contacts, as well as contact tracing of the case outside of the school.

Contact Tracing First Steps

- Above all, ensure the identity of the positive individual is protected.
- Interview the staff member or student's parent/guardian by telephone as soon as you receive a verbal or written report that they tested positive. Questions to ask include:
 - Were they were diagnosed through a test?
 - If so, what type (nose swab, mouth/oral swab, or blood test).
 - If they had only an antibody (blood test) and they have not had any symptoms, no further action is required.
 - What was the test date?
 - What was the last day they were at school? (Please confirm by looking at attendance files.)
 - If symptoms, please ask the first day of their symptoms.
 - If NO symptoms, confirm the test date again.
- Complete the CDPH Online COVID-19 Case Report Form: <http://redcap.link/chicovidreport> (select option 2 "Community congregate setting: single case or cluster of 2 or more cases").

Determining Who is a Close Contact

- By definition, close contacts are individuals with whom the positive case was within 6 feet for a total of 15 minutes or more starting **2 days prior to their first day of symptoms (or for asymptomatic individuals their test date) through their last day at school.**
- During Phase 4 of the COVID-19 response, depending on the classroom structure selected by the individual school, all students and staff within the positive individual's classroom/cohort could be considered close contacts.
 - Make sure to include any extracurricular activity groups (e.g., sports, music, before- and after-school programs)
 - In general, CDPH supports a broad definition of cohorts and broad quarantine of cohorts to facilitate timely quarantine and reduce transmission.
 - Rotation of teachers among cohorts should be limited and/or activities of the teacher with the cohort should be limited to reduce number of cohorts assigned to each teacher.
- Assess whether there were any other staff members not assigned to the classroom/cohort or students in other classrooms/cohorts with whom the positive individual had close contact (e.g., siblings or substitute teachers). If the positive individual is a staff member, this assessment should include an interview of that staff member.
- Once your [CDPH Online COVID-19 Case Report Form](#) is received by CDPH, you will receive an email with instructions on submitting the close contact list.
 - This list should include the following information:
 - Student_Staff Name

- Date of Birth
- Parent_Guardian Name
- Address
- All contact numbers on file
- Email address

Isolation/Quarantine Recommendations

Definitions:

- **Isolation** is used to separate people infected with SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, from people who are not infected. These individuals can have symptoms or no symptoms (asymptomatic). People who are in isolation should stay home until it's safe for them to be around others. In the home, anyone sick or infected should separate themselves from others by staying in a specific "sick room" or area and using a separate bathroom (if available).
- **Quarantine** is used to keep someone who might have been exposed to COVID-19 away from others. Quarantine helps prevent spread of disease that can occur before a person knows they are sick or if they are infected with the virus without feeling symptoms. People in quarantine should stay home, separate themselves from others and monitor their health.

For student or staff with a positive test:

- Ensure the positive individual is aware that they should isolate, meaning stay home and away from others until it has been at least 10 days since their symptoms first appeared (or for asymptomatic individuals, from their test date) and at least 24 hours with no fever (without using fever-reducing medications) and improved symptoms, whichever is longer.

For student or staff with an identified close contact exposure:

- The [CDC recommends](#) that any student or staff with close contact to a person suspected of having or diagnosed with COVID-19 be quarantined, meaning excluded from school for **14 days from the last day of exposure to a positive case** and monitored for symptoms. If symptoms develop, they should be evaluated and tested for COVID-19.
 - Negative testing does not clear a close contact to return to school sooner than 14 days from the date of last exposure.
- While masking of staff and students and other precautions are critical to prevent spread of COVID-19 within the school, out of an abundance of caution, these factors will not change the recommendation for quarantine of close contacts.

For student or staff with symptoms consistent with COVID-19, regardless of if they have a known contact:

- CDPH strongly recommends testing for all staff and students with symptoms suggestive of COVID-19.
- If a student or staff member has symptoms of COVID-19, they should be referred to their healthcare provider for testing and isolated while awaiting the test result.
- If a student or staff member has symptoms of COVID-19, and it is determined by a medical provider that the individual likely does NOT have a COVID-19 infection, the student or staff member may return to school if the following are met:

- **Documentation of a negative test for COVID-19; AND**
- **It has been 24-hours with no fever (without fever-reducing medication);**
 - If the two above criteria are met, a note from a medical provider documenting an alternate diagnosis is acceptable if the student or staff member continues to be symptomatic for another reason besides COVID-19 infection (e.g., seasonal allergies).
- Every effort should be made to connect the student or staff to testing but if a student or staff has symptoms, and cannot be tested for COVID-19, they should remain in isolation until it has been at least 10 days since their symptoms first appeared and at least 24 hours with no fever (without using fever-reducing medications) and improved symptoms, whichever is longer.
- NOTE: Depending on degree of suspicion, schools may consider quarantining the siblings of a symptomatic child or any household contacts of a symptomatic staff member who also attend the school, pending the results of testing.
 - Siblings/household members of exposed asymptomatic children do not require quarantine or testing unless they themselves were also exposed.
 - Depending on the degree of suspicion, parents/guardians may choose to separate quarantined children from those not required to quarantine at home.
- For additional *Procedures for Students, Teachers, and Support Staff who Become Sick at School*, refer to [IDPH Public Health Interim Guidance for Pre-K-12 Schools and Day Care Programs for Addressing COVID-19](#).

Notifications

- Notify the identified close contacts that they were exposed to someone with COVID-19 at the school. It is recommended that you notify exposed staff and the families of exposed students via a preferred, successful method of communication at your school. A sample close contact notification template is included at the end of this document and downloadable at www.chicagohan.org/covid-19 for those you may be unable to reach by other means or if you choose to send a written notification.
 - Instruct them to quarantine at home for 14 days from the last day of contact with the person who self-reported (do not reveal the identity of the positive case).
 - Close contacts should monitor their symptoms and contact their medical provider if they develop symptoms of COVID-19.
- All staff and students of the school, regardless of whether they are close contacts or not, should be notified of the positive case, while maintaining confidentiality. You may use the general notification letter template at the end of this document and downloadable at www.chicagohan.org/covid-19 as a guide.

Testing Recommendations

CDPH strongly recommends testing for all staff and students with symptoms suggestive of COVID-19. All close contacts (with or without symptoms) are recommended to be tested **between days 5 and 9 after exposure to a positive case**. Close contacts of positive cases should call their healthcare provider to arrange for testing. If other testing options are needed, refer to the [City of Chicago's coronavirus testing website](#).

- A negative result does not rule out developing COVID-19 disease and does not clear a close contact to return to school sooner than 14 days from the date of last exposure. Quarantine for 14 days is essential to continue to monitor for symptoms.
- A positive result should be reported as soon as possible to the school, who should then report to CDPH or the local health department (LHD) associated with the student or staff's home residence. See www.chicagohan.org/covid-19 for LHD contacts related to school reporting. If positive, individuals should isolate themselves until:
 - it has been at least 10 days since the onset of the individual's illness or specimen collection date;
 - the individual's symptoms, including cough, have improved; and
 - the individual is free from fever without the use of fever-reducing medications for at least 24 hours.

If a close contact develops symptoms at any time during the 14 days, the individual should be evaluated and tested for COVID-19 as soon as possible.

Cleaning

Perform enhanced cleaning and disinfection after persons suspected/confirmed to have COVID-19 have been at the school. Follow [CDC cleaning and disinfection recommendations](#). **Full school closures are not automatically required for cleaning if appropriate cohorting has occurred. Any decisions about full school closures should be made in consultation with CDPH.** Refer to [IDPH Public Health Interim Guidance for Pre-K-12 Schools and Day Care Programs for Addressing COVID-19](#) for additional instructions on environmental cleaning and disinfection.

Considerations for Transition to Remote Learning

CDPH supports Hybrid or In-person learning models in schools while moderate or controlled substantial disease activity exists in Chicago assuming school-specific implementation of appropriate precautions (outlined in ISBE, IDPH, and City of Chicago Reopening guidelines) and aggressive testing and containment policies are present. CDPH will continue to track concerning epidemiologic factors and provide feedback to local school systems in order to guide decision-making, acknowledging unique factors impacting each school system and community area. Factors available publicly on [Chicago COVID Dashboard](#) include case incidence, test-positivity, person-positivity, evidence of increased local and uncontrolled disease transmission and healthcare system capacity. The following framework will be referenced to guide joint school/public health decision-making.

Two or more of the following factors related specifically to Chicago disease activity may trigger a conversation with schools about additional mitigation steps, or other strategies, including remote learning. These factors include both a substantial disease burden and a concerning rate of increase in local COVID-19 cases:

- >400 COVID-19 cases per day (7-day rolling average) equivalent to >15 cases/day/100,000 population **AND ONE OF THE BELOW:**
 - "Large increase" in COVID-19 cases for one week, equivalent to +0.51-0.99 new cases/day/100,000 population. Based on Chicago's population, this is equivalent

to adding 14-26 new cases per day for one week (calculated using a 7-day average) **OR**

- "Increase" in COVID-19 cases for two weeks, equivalent to +0.21-0.5 new cases/day/100,000 population. Based on Chicago's population, this is equivalent to adding 6-13 new cases per day for two weeks (calculated using a 7-day average) **OR**
- Significant evidence of widespread transmission within schools

What Schools Can Expect After Reporting a Case

1. After receiving a report, CDPH may contact your school to discuss infection controls in place at your school and ways to protect your staff and students.
2. CDPH will call the positive staff member or family of the student once the positive lab result is received from a healthcare provider and conduct household and community contact tracing outside of your school.
3. You should notify CDPH if additional positive cases are identified in your school by filling out the CDPH COVID-19 confidential [online case report form](#) (select option 2 "Community congregate setting: single case or cluster of 2 or more cases").
4. Refer to the following resources for further information:
 - a. www.chicago.gov/coronavirus
 - b. [CDC Guidance for Schools](#)
 - c. [ISBE Phase 4 Guidance](#)
 - d. www.chicago.gov/reopening
 - e. [IDPH Interim Guidance for Pre-K-12 Schools \(8/17/20\)](#)
 - f. [ISBE/IDPH FAQs \(8/12/20\)](#)
 - g. [IDPH Guidance for Child's Face Covering Medical Tolerance](#)

Notification Templates (available for download at www.chicagohan.org/covid-19)

CLOSE CONTACT COMMUNICATION

Subject: Exposure to COVID-19 Case at _(SCHOOL)_

Dear _(Individual's Name)_,

We are writing to update you on a recent development regarding the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). We have learned that a _(SCHOOL)_ employee/student has been diagnosed with COVID-19. You were identified as a close contact of this individual.

You/your child should monitor your health starting now through _(DATE of 14 days after last exposure to positive case)_. Symptoms of COVID-19 include fever (temperature greater than 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit), chills, cough, shortness of breath, fatigue, muscle/body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, and diarrhea.

You/your child should not go to work or school and should avoid public places during this time.

If you/your child develop [symptoms of COVID-19](#), please contact your medical provider to discuss evaluation and testing. Any individuals who are sick with or exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 must stay home and away from others for at least 10 days since their symptoms first appeared and at least 1 day (24 hours) with no fever (without using fever-reducing medications) and improving symptoms, whichever is longer. See the Chicago Department of Public Health's [guidance on what to do if you are sick](#). If your symptoms are severe, such as difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, new confusion or difficulty waking up, or bluish lips or face, please seek the closest emergency department or call 9-1-1 immediately.

If you/your child do not have symptoms, it is recommended to be tested 5 to 9 days after your exposure to a positive case, which was _DATE_. Close contacts of positive cases are encouraged to call their healthcare provider to arrange for testing. If other testing options are needed, refer to the [City of Chicago's coronavirus testing website](#). Remember that even if you test negative, you must still complete the full 14-day quarantine. If you test positive, you must stay home for at least 10 days after your test date.

For any additional COVID-19 questions or support, please visit www.chicago.gov/coronavirus for the most reliable information. If you do not find the information you need on the website, email coronavirus@chicago.gov.

The health and wellness of our staff and students are the highest priority of _(SCHOOL)_. We continue to follow Chicago Department of Public Health and CDC guidelines as we ensure proper protocols and preventative measures are in place for the health and safety of our staff and students. Please contact us at _(SCHOOL CONTACT INFORMATION)_ if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

SIGNATURE

(SCHOOL LEADERSHIP NAME)

GENERAL COMMUNICATION

Subject: Confirmed COVID-19 Case at _(SCHOOL)_

Dear Staff and Families,

We are writing to update you on a recent development regarding the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). We have learned that a _(SCHOOL)_ employee/student has been diagnosed with COVID-19.

[The employee/student was last at the school on (DATE) - only to be included if it can be done without obviously identifying the individual. If needed, give a broad date like “the week of _____.”] To ensure the health and safety of our families and staff, following CDC guidance, _(SCHOOL)_ [will ensure/has conducted] appropriate cleaning and disinfection of our school.

Students and staff who have been identified as having been in prolonged close contact with this individual [will be/have been] notified via a separate communication. As a reminder, prolonged close contact is defined as being within 6 feet of an infected person for a total of 15 minutes or more. Those who had brief, casual contact with an infected individual are not considered at great risk of transmission and, for most people, the illness is generally mild and can be safely managed at home. As always, everyone should monitor their health and stay at home if they develop symptoms. Anyone who develops severe symptoms should seek medical care immediately.

We continue to follow Chicago Department of Public Health and CDC guidelines as we ensure proper protocols and preventative measures are in place for the health and safety of our staff and students.

Public Health Guidance

Symptoms of COVID-19 include fever (temperature greater than 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit), chills, cough, shortness of breath, fatigue, muscle/body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, and diarrhea. If you or your child develop symptoms of COVID-19, please contact your medical provider to discuss evaluation and testing.

For severe symptoms, such as difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, new confusion or difficulty waking up, or bluish lips or face, please seek the closest emergency department or call 9-1-1 immediately.

Any individuals who are sick with or exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 must stay home and away from others for at least 10 days since their symptoms first appeared and at least 1 day (24 hours) with no fever (without using fever-reducing medications) and improved symptoms, whichever is longer.

For any additional COVID-19 questions or support, please visit www.chicago.gov/coronavirus for the most reliable information. If you do not find the information you need on the website, email coronavirus@chicago.gov. The health and wellness of our staff and students are the highest priority of _(SCHOOL)_. Please contact us at _(SCHOOL CONTACT INFORMATION)_ if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

SIGNATURE
(SCHOOL LEADERSHIP NAME)