

Response to a Confirmed Case of COVID-19 and Persons with COVID-19 Symptoms in Schools

Updated May 20, 2021

This guidance accompanies the *“Decision Aid: Exclusion and Return for Persons with COVID-19 Symptoms and Close Contacts in Child Care, Schools, and Youth Camps.”*

This guidance applies to persons with confirmed COVID-19, regardless of whether they have symptoms, and persons with symptoms of COVID-19 (including probable cases who have symptoms and exposure) and is to be implemented by schools and local school systems in collaboration with the local health department (LHD). This guidance is meant to supplement, where necessary, current communicable disease and outbreak investigation processes, current school health services illness management processes, and current LHD COVID-19 response processes. Schools and local health departments should also refer to CDC guidance, including [Considerations for Case Investigation and Contact Tracing in K-12 Schools and Institutions of Higher Education](#).

Communication and Notification

- Schools should develop processes to inform staff and parents that they are expected to notify the school as soon possible about absences due to illness, when a staff person or child has tested positive for COVID-19, and when a staff person or child has had close contact with a person with confirmed or probable COVID-19;
- Schools should communicate to parents the expectation that students who become ill at school MUST be picked up within a specified period of time;
- Schools must follow existing procedures for reporting communicable diseases (COMAR 10.06.01) and notify the LHD when a student or staff member has tested positive for COVID-19;
- While the LHD should lead the processes of case investigation and contact tracing, schools play a key role in obtaining and communicating critical information and should have a plan to collaborate and coordinate with the LHD for school case investigation and contact tracing procedures including determining the role of the school nurse, the school administrator, and the LHD;
- Schools should provide written notification to all identified close contacts. The notification should make it clear that the contact should expect a call from health department contact tracers and also the include the following information:
 - When to seek medical care
 - How to monitor for symptoms
 - Who to contact and how to contact them if they develop symptoms of COVID-19 while under quarantine
 - The projected length of quarantine if they remain asymptomatic based on school or local school system implementation of MDH quarantine guidance

- Plan for maintaining remote learning for those who remain well enough to engage in learning while under quarantine
- Information about local COVID-19 testing sites.

Exclusion, Isolation, Quarantine, and Return to School

- If a student or school staff member develops symptoms of COVID-19 **during the school day**, the school should:
 - Safely isolate the person in the designated isolation area and place a surgical mask on the person if they are not wearing a cloth face covering as appropriate;
 - The school health services staff member should don the appropriate PPE and conduct the appropriate determination of the student's condition based on presenting symptoms;
 - Begin the process for the person to vacate the school as soon as possible;
- The school should follow the "Decision Aid: Exclusion and Return for Persons with COVID-19 Symptoms and Close Contacts in Child Care, Schools, and Youth Camps" (see attachment);
- The school should also follow the instructions from the LHD for all matters regarding exclusion, isolation, quarantine, and return to school for persons with confirmed or probable COVID-19 and close contacts; and
- If the number of laboratory confirmed cases of COVID-19 meets the definition of an outbreak, the response decisions, including possible classroom or school closure and recommendations for COVID-19 testing of staff and students will be made by the LHD.

Decision Aid: Exclusion and Return for Persons with COVID-19 Symptoms and Close Contacts in Child Care, Schools, and Youth Camps

For the purposes of this decision aid, **COVID-19 symptoms** are any ONE of the following: fever of 100.4° or higher, sore throat, cough, difficulty breathing, diarrhea or vomiting, new onset of severe headache (especially with fever), or new loss of taste or smell. For persons with chronic conditions such as asthma, the symptoms should represent a change from baseline.

| Exclude all persons (child, care provider, educator, other staff) with COVID-19 symptoms and recommend evaluation by a health care provider and testing for COVID-19 ¹ | Recommendations for the person with symptoms who is NOT FULLY VACCINATED Individuals are fully vaccinated 2 weeks after receiving either 1) both doses of a 2-dose vaccine series or 2) a single dose vaccine. | Recommendations for close contacts of the person with symptoms |
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| Person has symptoms and positive test for COVID-19 or clinical diagnosis of COVID-19 | May return when it has been at least 10 days since symptoms first appeared AND no fever for at least 24 hours without fever-reducing medication AND improvement of other symptoms. | All close contacts should quarantine according to MDH and local guidance <i>except</i> those who are fully vaccinated OR have been infected with COVID-19 in the past 90 days AND are asymptomatic. |
| Person has symptoms and negative test for COVID-19 | If no known exposure, may return when symptoms have improved, no fever for 24 hours without fever-reducing medication, AND applicable criteria in the Communicable Diseases Summary have been met. If known exposure, may return when quarantine completed according to MDH and local guidance. | Close contacts do not need to quarantine. |
| Person has symptoms and health care provider documents symptoms are due to a specific alternative diagnosis (ex. strep throat, otitis media, pre-existing condition such as asthma) | If no known exposure, may return when symptoms have improved, no fever for at least 24 hours without fever-reducing medication, AND applicable criteria in the Communicable Diseases Summary have been met. If known exposure, may return when quarantine completed according to MDH and local guidance. | Close contacts do not need to quarantine. |
| Person has symptoms with no negative test for COVID-19 AND no specific alternative diagnosis | If no known exposure, may return when it has been at least 10 days since symptoms first appeared AND no fever for at least 24 hours without fever-reducing medication AND improvement of other symptoms. | Household members ² should not attend or work in a child care, school, or youth camp until the person with symptoms is able to return <i>except</i> those who are fully vaccinated OR have been infected with COVID-19 in the past 90 days AND are asymptomatic. |
| | If known exposure, may return when it has been at least 10 days since symptoms first appeared AND no fever for at least 24 hours without fever-reducing medication AND improvement of other symptoms. | All close contacts should quarantine according to MDH and local guidance <i>except</i> those who are fully vaccinated OR have been infected with COVID-19 in the past 90 days AND are asymptomatic. |

¹For persons with symptoms who were previously infected with COVID-19 and recovered, follow [CDC guidance](#).

²These persons should not be reported to the local health department as contacts. The child care, school, or youth camp should inform the household members of these recommendations.

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| Exclude all persons (child, care provider, educator, other staff) with COVID-19 symptoms and recommend evaluation by a health care provider and testing for COVID-19 if indicated ¹ | Recommendations for the person with symptoms who is FULLY VACCINATED Individuals are fully vaccinated 2 weeks after receiving either 1) both doses of a 2-dose vaccine series or 2) a single dose vaccine. | Recommendations for close contacts of the person with symptoms |
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| Person has symptoms and health care provider documents symptoms are due to a specific alternative diagnosis (ex. strep throat, otitis media, pre-existing condition such as asthma) | May return when symptoms have improved, no fever for at least 24 hours without fever-reducing medication, AND applicable criteria in the Communicable Diseases Summary have been met. | Close contacts do not need to quarantine. |
| Person has symptoms and no negative test for COVID-19 AND no specific alternative diagnosis | If no known exposure, may return when symptoms have improved, no fever for 24 hours without fever-reducing medication, AND applicable criteria in the Communicable Diseases Summary have been met. Person should have written health care provider assessment that COVID-19 testing is not indicated and risk of COVID-19 is low. | Close contacts do not need to quarantine. |
| | If known exposure, may return when it has been at least 10 days since symptoms first appeared AND no fever for at least 24 hours without fever-reducing medication AND improvement of other symptoms. | All close contacts should quarantine according to MDH and local guidance <i>except</i> those who are fully vaccinated OR have been infected with COVID-19 in the past 90 days AND are asymptomatic. |

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