COVID-19 Best Practices in K-12 Schools & Higher Education

While the Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) is moving away from universal case investigation and contact tracing, K-12 schools and institutions of higher education are recommended to continue using COVID-19 best practices to limit transmission and maintain in-person learning. There may be staffing and other circumstances that prevent some or all of these practices from being used; however, OSDH recommends that schools have a flexible plan to prevent COVID-19 among their populations. If transmission within the school increases, implement additional mitigation measures.

Key Best Practices

Promote COVID-19 Vaccination. Staff and students who are eligible to be vaccinated can do so for FREE at their local county health department and many other locations. Click here for primary vaccination series and booster recommendations.

Encourage consistent and correct mask use. CDC recommends indoor masking for all individuals ages 2 years and older, including students, teachers, staff, and visitors, regardless of vaccination status. Mask use in combination with COVID-19 testing forms the basis for CDC’s Test-to-Stay recommendations.

Encourage physical distancing and/or the use of student/staff grouping (co-horting).

Stay home when sick and get tested

- Encourage daily symptom monitoring at home and school. Communicate and enforce the school’s sick policy. This policy should include: 1) when an ill person should be kept home, 2) when an ill person will be sent home from school, and 3) criteria for them to return to school.
- OSDH has developed a symptom assessment tool to help determine when someone should be kept home or sent home from school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“A” Symptoms</th>
<th>“B” Symptoms</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fever &gt; =100.4 F</td>
<td>Nasal Congestion/Stuffy Nose</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sore Throat</td>
<td>Runny Nose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cough</td>
<td>Muscle/Body Aches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty Breathing</td>
<td>Fatigue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diarrhea or Vomiting</td>
<td>Chills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Loss of Taste or Smell</td>
<td>Nausea</td>
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</tbody>
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Recommend testing when:

- Person has 1 “A” Symptom OR
- Person has 3 “B” Symptoms

Elevated Temperature < 100.4 F
New Onset of Severe Headache
Loss of Appetite

Health.ok.gov Updated 2.11.22
• Develop leave policies that encourage sick and exposed staff and students to stay home and get tested, when appropriate.
• Find OSDH isolation guidance along with calculators here.

**Develop and communicate a written process for exposed contacts** to a person who is ill or tests positive for COVID-19. Find OSDH quarantine guidance along with calculators here. If quarantine is not possible, consider implementing a Test-to-Stay program.

**Implement in-school testing programs** to help keep school open to in-person learning.
• Enroll in the Oklahoma Schools COVID-19 Prevention Program. This grant funded program provides financial and resource support to schools to reduce COVID-19 transmission. It provides screening testing to help schools with early detection of COVID-19 in people who are asymptomatic, pre-symptomatic, or mildly symptomatic. Onsite COVID-19 Testing Recommendations for Schools summarizes testing types and provides suggestions for prioritizing limited rapid antigen testing supplies. Resources for Oklahoma Schools provides other helpful links and contact information.

• Schools may still order free tests and PPE supplies from OSDH through BigCommerce while supplies last, even if not interested or enrolled in the grant funded program above.

• If schools are conducting point-of-care COVID-19 testing on school grounds (school-based testing), all results are required to be reported to the Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH). The designated reporting process for school-based testing is via the State Infection Reporting System (SIRS) which is located in Single Sign-On. Email Dean Hupp at dhupp@e2inttech.com to register for access to SIRS. He can also provide instructions on how to use the system. This will be the only accepted reporting method for school-based testing.

Enroll in Operation Expanded Testing. This federal program provides schools with access to free and timely PCR testing that can be done with the school’s existing staff; no medical staff are needed. A CLIA license is not required since testing is conducted at an offsite lab. Test results will be reported to the school and OSDH, and tested individuals can access their results through a secure results portal. These results do not need to be reported through the State Infection Reporting System (SIRS) on the OSDE Single Sign-On platform.

**Encourage parents and staff to participate in OSDH’s new COVID-19 case investigation and contact tracing program.** Learn more about the program here. Oklahoma residents with cell phones can receive their test results through a text message and complete their own investigation through an online survey. This online survey process provides users with isolation and quarantine recommendations as well as access to exclusion and return letters. Case investigators are still available to interview individuals who prefer to speak to someone on the phone, answer questions, and help with reported outbreaks: (405) 522-0001.

**Continue to**
• Encourage handwashing and respiratory etiquette
• Maintain clean and healthy facilities. Cleaning, Disinfecting and Ventilation.

**Who to Call**
• Contact your local County Health Department or (405) 522 – 0001 with questions, concerns, or support for controlling COVID-19 within your schools or if you have an unusual exposure situation.