



New quarantine guidance for schools

Governor Stitt and Health Commissioner Frye announced new quarantine guidance that can be used by schools to improve in-school attendance of students and staff who have an in-school exposure to COVID-19. OSDH wants to provide a more detailed version of that guidance with answers to questions we know will arise. We'd also like to provide guidance on case and contact investigations within school settings, in light of the updated quarantine guidance.

Summary of new school quarantine guidance:

Students and teachers exposed to someone who tests positive for COVID-19 in school are no longer required to be excluded from educational activities and in-person classroom instruction as long as the exposure happened in a classroom setting and everyone was wearing masks covering their nose and mouth. Other quarantine requirements remain in effect, including exclusion from social activities or other public environments.

Further explanation of guidance:

- This is not a mandatory policy. School districts have the ability to decide whether to implement this policy or continue with their current plan.
- This new guidance can be implemented immediately by school districts.
- The new guidance still requires the person who tests positive for COVID-19 to isolate at home.
- This guidance is similar to the quarantine guidance recommended for essential workers. The exception for quarantine is only applicable for classroom attendance. Exposed students and staff should still be identified by school officials; parents and staff notified of the exposure; and those individuals excluded from all public settings outside the classroom until they meet normal quarantine criteria. Students and staff considered exposed to a case of COVID-19 within the classroom setting will still require exclusion from other high-risk school activities where masking is either not feasible or is not known to be effective at preventing transmission of COVID-19 (i.e., band, choir, PE, and sports).
- Any student or staff who develops symptoms consistent with COVID-19 while at school should be excluded from the setting immediately, regardless of whether they have been allowed to remain at school post-exposure in a classroom.



- This new quarantine guidance is contingent upon both the case and the contact wearing masks (with modest exceptions; see below). This will incentivize mask policies in schools across the state.
- This guidance is intended ONLY for exposures that occur in classrooms, classroom-like settings, and other situations essential for instruction of K-12 students. Classroom-like settings are school-associated activities that are set up and supervised like a classroom and allow for universal masking by all students and staff. Other situations essential for instruction would include riding the bus and school lunch time. Classroom and other essential settings do NOT extend to include strenuous activities, or other circumstances likely to result in increased production of respiratory droplets. Exposure occurring in the following settings will still require exclusion from all public settings, including in-person attendance in the classroom:
 - Household and household-like exposure
 - Exposure during out-of-school activities
 - Exposure during high-risk school activities where masking is either not feasible or is not effective at preventing transmission of COVID-19 (i.e., band, choir, PE, and sports)
- This new guidance is being proposed based on a large study published by the American Academy of Pediatrics which found low rates of secondary transmission within school settings that had universal masking and other mitigation policies. [peds.2020-048090.full.pdf \(aappublications.org\)](https://aappublications.org/peds.2020-048090.full.pdf) One point the authors did discuss was about a few secondary transmission clusters. These clusters occurred among very young children, during lunch, or among children with substantial special needs. OSDH recommends that school districts recognize these scenarios for potential sources of secondary transmission and implement enhanced mitigation efforts for them. Masks can be worn safely by children greater than 2 years of age. Lunch time can be socially distanced, physical barriers implemented between students, or assigned seating used to limit exposure to a small group of children. In the special needs environment, consider the use of a face shield if the child is unable to wear a mask, emphasize increased social distancing, and increase ventilation.

Monitoring guidance for secondary transmission and clusters within schools:

- The new quarantine guidance for schools will allow school districts the ability to make decisions about quarantine for students and staff that best suits their situation. The quarantine guidance was developed to provide protection to students and staff from COVID transmission in the school setting while also facilitating less disruption to in-person instruction.

The Acute Disease Service (ADS) recommends schools remain vigilant about possible transmission within the school in case masks are not worn as recommended resulting in unexpected spread of COVID-19. If transmission within the school is suspected, please notify the ADS Epi-on-Call to report the suspected transmission. ADS staff will work with the school to determine if any additional mitigation measures should be taken at that time.



During the four weeks following an identified case (i.e., the beginning and end of their infectious period while at school), monitor for infections in students, teachers, or staff who had exposure to the same classroom, lunchroom, or other official school activities. Such secondary infections would indicate heightened concerns for others who were also present at the time and may warrant additional quarantine, testing, or both.

We understand that transmission in the community is high, therefore, be vigilant for cases with a known connection to a case within the school but no known connection to a case outside of school (i.e., home, friends, church, other extra-curricular activities).

Case and contact investigations and reporting by school districts:

- Protocols and processes currently being used by school districts to identify cases and exposed contacts will not change. All identified cases and close contacts will be entered into the OSDE portal for reporting. Affected students, staff, and teachers will be notified of contact, as is the school districts' current policy.