



Frequently Asked Questions for Schools

January 14, 2022

Q1: Are schools required to do contact tracing when students or staff test positive for, develop symptoms of, or are exposed to COVID-19?

No. Schools may work with their local health department to ensure that members of the school community, including students, staff, and teachers, who test positive for, develop symptoms of or are exposed to COVID-19 have access to the information they need to take appropriate steps to protect themselves and others. This may include isolating or quarantining, notifying close contacts, staying home when ill, monitoring symptoms, and wearing a well-fitting mask. Isolation and quarantine attestation forms, and related information are available at [state and local health department websites](#).

When known close contact with someone who tested positive for or has symptoms of COVID-19 occurs on the school campus, for example, in a classroom, schools should at least notify parents and guardians of affected students. Exposed individuals should be referred to information provided by the state or local health department and should follow the [quarantine guidance](#) as noted below.

Q2. Do students and staff need to isolate if they have COVID-19 or COVID-19 symptoms?

Yes. Isolation is used to separate people with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 from those without COVID-19, regardless of vaccination status. Everyone who has presumed or confirmed COVID-19 should stay home and isolate from other people for at least 5 full days (day 0 is the first day of symptoms or the date of the positive viral test was taken for asymptomatic persons). If symptoms persist further isolation will be required; otherwise, they may attend school or work after the 5-day isolation. They should wear a mask when around others at home, at work, and in public for an additional 5 days in accordance with [Department guidelines](#).

Q3: Do students and staff need to quarantine if they have been exposed to someone with COVID-19?

- **In-classroom activities**: All fully vaccinated* individuals (students, teachers, and staff), who have been exposed to an individual with COVID-19, and who are asymptomatic, may continue to attend or work at school, including public transportation, regardless of booster status, while quarantined outside of school (see below). This recommendation continues previous guidance in place prior to January 4, 2022. Continued attendance applies only to participation in classroom activities and using public transportation to and from school.
 - *Fully vaccinated is defined as two weeks after the receipt of either two doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccine or one dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine or full course of any other recognized vaccine.
- **Extracurricular or after school activities**: Individuals 12 years and older who are eligible for a

booster but not boosted, and who have been exposed to an individual with COVID-19, cannot participate in extracurricular or after school activities and, aside from school attendance for instruction and travel to and from school, must adhere to a 5-day quarantine at home. Fully vaccinated 5-11-year-old children are not eligible for a booster and are not restricted from extracurricular or after school activities.

- Students, teachers, and staff who are not vaccinated or have not completed a primary vaccine series who came into close contact with someone with COVID-19 should quarantine for at least 5 days (day 0 through day 5) after their last close contact. These individuals may be eligible for [Test to Stay](#) programs that would allow them to stay in the school setting during the quarantine period. Outside the school setting, quarantine recommendations would apply.

Q4: How does a school know if an employee needs to isolate or quarantine due to testing positive for, having symptoms of, or being exposed to COVID-19?

Employees should report this information to their employer pursuant to their employer’s health information, COVID-19, or sick leave protocol. Employees may attest to their isolation or quarantine status by completing an Isolation or Quarantine form available on the [New York State Department of Health website](#) or Local Health Department website.

Q5: If a school employee develops COVID-19, will the Local Health Department do an investigation and order exposed employees into quarantine?

Individuals who test positive for COVID-19 or have COVID-19 symptoms should isolate and notify their close contacts that they may have been exposed to COVID-19. Individuals who test positive for COVID-19 or have COVID-19 symptoms should refer close contacts to the state or local health department website to learn about the steps they should take because of the exposure.

The Local Health Department may or may not do a case investigation. Isolation and quarantine attestation forms and related information are available at [state and local health department websites](#).

Q6. Are masks required in schools?

Yes, masks are required in schools at all times, except when actively eating, drinking, or participating in music instruction as part of a regular academic curriculum where masking is impractical and social distancing has been implemented. When students are outside and able to maintain six feet of distance, masks are not required.

Universal masking of teachers, staff, students, and visitors to PK-12 schools over age two and able to medically tolerate a face covering/mask and regardless of vaccination status, is required indoors. Further, the requirement is extended to any gathering on school grounds which addresses or implements educational matters where students are or may reasonably be expected to be present. “Mask breaks” during the school day are not permitted and there is no exception to the masking requirement on the basis of minimal social distancing in classrooms. This is in accordance with CDC guidance recommending universal masking in schools to keep children in school without risking close contact exposure and subsequent quarantines.