

Interim COVID-19 guidance for schools: Management of suspect and confirmed COVID-19 cases

This guidance is intended for schools to plan their response to known or possible cases of COVID-19 as well as known contacts. This is based on what is currently known about COVID-19 and will be updated as more information and guidance become available.

Students or staff with symptoms of COVID-19

Students and staff should be excluded from school if they have:

- Any one (1) of the following
 - Fever – or-
 - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing -or -
 - Loss of taste or smell -or –
 - New or worsening cough

- Any two (2) of the following:
 - Sore throat
 - Muscle or body aches
 - Chills
 - Fatigue
 - Headache
 - Congestion or runny nose
 - Diarrhea
 - Nausea or vomiting

Note: Any child with any one of these symptoms should consider not attending school regardless of meeting exclusion criteria. If these symptoms are explainable by an underlying condition (such as shortness of breath or cough for an individual with asthma) exclusion may not be necessary.

Schools should plan to have a room identified to isolate students or staff with symptoms of COVID-19 identified during the school day.

- Students and staff should be moved safely, respectfully, as well as in accordance with any applicable privacy laws or regulations, to the isolation room for evaluation. The individual should be provided a mask if they are able to use one, and students should be supervised by a staff member who maintains at least six feet of distance and uses appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) if available.

- School nurses and other healthcare providers should use [Standard and Transmission-Based Precautions](#) when caring for sick people. See: What Healthcare Personnel Should Know About [Caring for Patients with Confirmed or Possible COVID19 Infection](#).

Return to school

- Advise sick staff members and children not to return until they have met criteria for return.
- Students or staff excluded for these symptoms should not return until they have either tested negative for COVID-19 or a medical evaluation determines that their symptoms were more likely due to another cause (e.g. sore throat due to strep throat). In this later case, the individual can return when they meet criteria for that condition.
- Students or staff that require testing for COVID-19 will require a negative PCR test (mouth or nose swab) or similar rapid test that directly detects the virus or must complete the current isolation criteria for COVID-19 to return to school.
- Current **isolation criteria** for COVID-19:
 - Students and staff who test positive for COVID-19 and persons with symptoms of COVID-19 (see list above) who do not get tested, should isolate until:
 - Ten (10) days have passed since symptoms started - and -
 - Three (3) days (72 hours) have passed since last fever without taking medicine to reduce fever - and -
 - Overall improvement in symptoms.
 - Those who test positive by a PCR test but do not have symptoms will be required to stay out of school until ten (10) days after the specimen was collected.
 - The criteria above should be used to determine eligibility to return to school. Negative PCR test results are not required after meeting these criteria.

Testing

A student or staff member who develops symptoms of COVID-19 but does not get tested could limit DHEC's ability to appropriately respond to new cases and ensure the health and safety of other students and staff. PCR testing (nose or throat swab) or similar rapid test that directly detects the virus is required as there is delay in developing detectable antibodies. A negative antibody test is insufficient to rule out a new infection.

- Location of testing sites is available on the DHEC website: <https://scdhec.gov/infectious-diseases/viruses/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19/covid-19-screening-testing-sites>
- Location of DHEC mobile and pop-up testing sites: <https://www.scdhec.gov/infectious-diseases/viruses/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19/covid-19-mobile-pop-clinics>

Cases in classroom

If a student or staff member tests positive, they could have been contagious with the virus up to 48 hours before their symptoms began or before their test specimen was collected (for those with no symptoms).

- Prevention - Routinely using these precautions will help avoid the need to quarantine all classroom contacts of persons with COVID-19:

- It is essential that staff ensure maximum distancing between students and other staff while in the classroom and throughout the day to limit the possibility of transmission.
- Encourage the use of masks among students and staff able to use them.
- Anyone known to be a **close contact** (defined as being within six (6) feet for fifteen (15) minutes or more) to a COVID-19 case while contagious must be excluded from school for fourteen (14) days after last contact with the person with COVID-19. This exclusion requirement applies even if masks were worn if social distancing was not maintained.
- For any classrooms where social distancing could not be maintained (classes with young children who do not have assigned seating throughout the day), all children and staff must be considered close contacts and must complete a fourteen (14) day quarantine period.
- Students and teachers in a classroom with a known COVID-19 case in which social distancing was reliably maintained should remain together in the same cohort to the extent that is possible. They should receive screening for fever and symptoms (see above) each morning until 14 days after last contact with the case. Note: anyone determined to be a “close contact” must be excluded.
 - Any of these students or teachers who are monitored and found to have symptoms of COVID-19 should be sent home and excluded and will be required to get tested or complete the required isolation period to return to school.
- The classroom will need to be closed for [cleaning and disinfection](#) before use again.

Quarantine

Some students or staff may have been told they were a close contact to a case of COVID-19 and have to complete a quarantine period. This means they will be required to stay home so they do not risk exposing others to COVID-19 if they become sick. DHEC staff will inform them of the length of their quarantine period. For students, a parents’ note that they have been cleared from quarantine may be used to allow return to school

- Close Contact: The standard quarantine period is fourteen (14) days after last close contact with person while they were contagious with COVID-19.
- Household contact: If the student or staff lives in the same household as the case and has daily close contact, they will have to quarantine for an additional fourteen (14) days after the day their household member has been cleared from their isolation period.
- Other household members in quarantine: If the student or staff lives in the same household as someone in quarantine, they will not necessarily need to quarantine themselves unless the household member in quarantine is then determined to be a COVID-19 case. DHEC will notify those who are required to complete quarantine.

Note: This guidance is consistent with information available as of July 8, 2020 and may be updated as new information on this novel virus and evolving situation become available.