

# K-12 School Settings Frequently Asked Questions

Riverside University Health System – Public Health

## ISOLATION

### What is isolation?

**Isolation:** People who have one or more of the symptoms associated with COVID-19 and/or have tested positive for COVID-19 are required to isolate away from others while they may be contagious with COVID-19. A person with symptoms is considered contagious 2 days before their symptoms began and up to 10 days after. An asymptomatic individual is considered contagious from 2 days before the date their first positive test sample was collected and up to 10 days after.

For more information, please refer to the California department of Public Health (CDPH) [Guidance on Isolation and Quarantine for COVID-19 \(ca.gov\)](#).

### What is the definition of a close contact?

- In indoor spaces 400,000 or fewer cubic feet per floor (classroom, gymnasium, etc.), a close contact is defined as sharing the same indoor airspace for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period during an infected person's infectious period.
- In large indoor spaces greater than 400,000 cubic feet per floor (open-floor-plan offices), a close contact is defined as being within 6 feet of the infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period during the infected person's infectious period.

Spaces that are separated by floor-to-ceiling walls (e.g., offices, suites, rooms, waiting areas, bathrooms, or break or eating areas that are separated by floor-to-ceiling walls) must be considered distinct indoor airspaces.

For more information, please refer to [Order of the State Public Health Officer Beyond Blueprint \(ca.gov\)](#)

### What are the requirements for returning from isolation?

**Staff:** Staff must test negative on or after day 5 from onset of symptoms or if no symptoms are present from the test date. Once a negative test is recorded, staff may return to work on day 6 or later if fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications. If fever is present, isolation should be continued until 24 hours after fever resolves. Staff must provide proof of negative COVID-19 test result when returning on day 6 or before day 10 of end of isolation.

A well fitted mask must be worn for the remainder of the 10-day isolation period. Masks **must** be always worn while at work, may only remove mask while eating or drinking. If staff is unable to test, choosing not to test, or testing positive on Day 5 (or later), isolation can end after Day 10 if fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications.

**Students:** Isolation can end after Day 5 if symptoms are not present or are resolving and a diagnostic specimen collected on Day 5 or later tests negative. If unable to test, choosing not to test, or testing positive on Day 5 (or later), isolation can end after Day 10 if fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications. If fever is present, isolation should be continued until 24 hours after fever resolves. No written proof of negative COVID-19 test result is needed; self-attestation by parent or guardian will be sufficient. If student is 18 years of age, student can self-attest negative result.

Per CDPH masking guidance, infected persons should wear a well-fitting mask around others for a total of 10 days, especially in indoor settings. Students are not restricted from any extra-curricular activities. [Guidance on Isolation and Quarantine for COVID-19 \(ca.gov\)](#)

### **Does an individual need to show proof of a negative COVID-19 test result before returning from isolation?**

**Staff-** Yes, staff need to show proof of a negative test result if they want to return on day 6 after testing on day 5 of isolation. To comply with the testing requirements of the Cal/OSHA’s COVID-19 Emergency Temporary Standards (Cal/OSHA’s COVID-19 ETS), an over-the-counter (OTC) COVID-19 test may be both self-administered and self-read if verification of the results, such as a time and date stamped photograph of the result or an OTC test that uses digital reporting with time and date stamped results, is provided. [COVID-19 Emergency Temporary Standards Frequently Asked Questions \(ca.gov\)](#)

If **staff** is isolating for a full 10 days, there is no need to show proof of negative test when returning.

**Student-** No, students no longer need to show proof of a COVID-19 test result, but self-attestation by parent or guardian for negative result is required. If student is 18 years of age, student can self-attest negative result.

## TESTING, QUARANTINE AND VACCINATION

### **Can at-home testing be used to satisfy testing requirement?**

Schools may accept the results of at-home testing from both staff and students, for the same uses for which antigen tests are approved. Schools are encouraged to use a means described in the [Over-The-Counter Tests Guidance](#) to verify the results on tests administered at home. See the “What are best practices for verification of self-test results?” section for specific recommendations.

### Why should students test if its recommended but not required?

People can transmit the virus at least 2 days before developing symptoms, discovering that a child is positive early can prevent many of their friends, classmates, and co-workers from being exposed. It reduces the chance that they might pass the virus on to others, thus impacting additional classmates and K-12 staff.

Exposed students, regardless of COVID-19 vaccination status, should get tested for COVID-19 with at least one diagnostic test obtained within 3-5 days after last exposure, unless they had COVID-19 within the last 90 days.

### Do exposed individuals (regardless of vaccination) need to test after exposure?

**Staff:** Yes, staff are required to test 3 - 5 days after last known exposure.

Please refer to School Staff Protocol for more information. [School Staff Protocols 8.12.2022.pdf \(ruhealth.org\)](#)

**Students:** No, students are not required to test after exposure; however, it is strongly recommended they test 3-5 days from last known exposure.

### Do exposed individuals (regardless of vaccination) need to quarantine after exposure?

Students and staff no longer need to quarantine after being exposed to the COVID virus, as long as they do not experience any symptoms during the 10 days after exposure. For more information, please refer to [Isolation and Quarantine Fact Sheet \(ca.gov\)](#).

### Do unvaccinated staff members still need to undergo weekly testing?

No, unvaccinated staff are no longer required to undergo weekly COVID-19 testing per State Public Health Officer Order of September 13, 2022. For the complete Public Health Officer Order, please see: [Order of the State Public Health Officer Vaccine Verification for Workers in Schools](#)

### What support is available to improve access to testing in schools?

CDPH has multiple current programs which can help facilitate access to testing in the school testing.

- For full details on testing programs available to schools, and On-campus antigen testing at no cost for schools. For details, see [School Testing for COVID-19 \(ca.gov\)](#)
- For support and/or questions, please email [schoolbinax@cdph.ca.gov](mailto:schoolbinax@cdph.ca.gov).
- Over-The Counter Testing Information- [Over-The-Counter-Tests-LHJ-Guidance \(ca.gov\)](#)

- At-Home COVID-19 Tests for K-12 Students Form [At-Home COVID-19 Tests for K-12 Students · Starter Portal \(powerappsportals.us\)](https://powerappsportals.us)
- CDPH Organization Registration Form (OTC Testing)- <https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/f4dd968600db400c94b4340b9393d5a2>

**How can a parent/guardian submit positive COVID-19 results to a school?**

It is up to the school/district to determine how they will request confirmation of a positive COVID-19 result. Self-attestations by a parent or guardian, a student of 18 years of age can self-attest positive result, are acceptable or platforms for uploading results such as Primary Health can be used. For more information about Primary Health please visit [Primary Health - COVID-19 Vaccination & Testing Software](#)

**How can schools possibly partner with Riverside University Health System – Public Health (RUHS-PH) for on-campus vaccine clinics?**

If your school or district is interested in partnering with us for vaccine clinics, please reach out to [rivco-schools@ruhealth.org](mailto:rivco-schools@ruhealth.org).

**MASKING**

**Is masking required in K-12 schools?**

Masking in **strongly recommended** for all individuals (e.g., students and staff) in K-12 indoor settings, with consideration of exemptions per CDPH face mask guidance.

**When is masking required in K-12 schools?**

**Staff:** If staff is returning to school prior to day 10, masking is required when returning from isolation through day 10 and for 10 days after a known exposure. Please refer to staff isolation and exposed staff section above.

**Students:** Masking in K-12 schools is strongly recommended for students while indoors regardless of vaccination status. **Masking is strongly recommended when returning from isolation through day 10 and for 10 days after a known exposure.**



**What types of masks are considered “well-fitting masks”, and these are acceptable for students who decide to continue wearing a mask?**

There are several examples of well-fitted mask options for adults and children. Please visit the following link for more information [Get the Most Out of Masking \(ca.gov\)](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Get-the-Most-Out-of-Masking.aspx)

**OUTBREAK**

**What is an outbreak?**

At least three suspected, probable, or confirmed COVID-19 cases within a 14-day period among people who are epidemiologically linked in the setting, and are not known to be close contacts of each other in any other case investigation, **OR** for large settings (a facility or workplace with >100 persons present in the setting), particularly during high levels of community transmission, local health departments may determine that a higher proportion (at least 5%) of cases within a 14-day period may be appropriate for defining an outbreak, even in the absence of identifiable epidemiological linkages.

**Who is considered an exposed group when it comes to a staff outbreak?**

All employees at a work location, working area, or a common area at work, where an employee COVID-19 case was present at any time during the infectious period. A common area at work includes bathrooms, walkways, hallways, aisles, break or eating areas, and waiting areas

**What is the guidance for Contact tracing when employees are exposed?**

Please refer to Table 2 below. To review Table 1 and the full CDPH General Isolation and Quarantine Guidance, please see: [Guidance on Isolation and Quarantine for COVID-19 \(ca.gov\)](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Guidance-on-Isolation-and-Quarantine-for-COVID-19.aspx)

**Table 2: Close Contacts - General Public (No Quarantine)**

Asymptomatic Persons Who are Exposed to Someone with COVID-19 (No Quarantine)	Recommended Actions
<p>Everyone, regardless of vaccination status.</p> <p>Persons infected within the prior 90 days do not need to be tested, quarantined, or excluded from work unless symptoms develop.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Test within 3-5 days after last exposure.</li> <li>• Per CDPH masking guidance, close contacts should wear a well-fitting mask around others for a total of 10 days, especially in indoor settings and when near those at higher risk for severe COVID-19 disease (see masking section below for additional information).</li> <li>• Strongly encouraged to get vaccinated or boosted.</li> <li>• If symptoms develop, test and stay home (see earlier section on symptomatic persons), AND</li> <li>• If test result is positive, follow isolation recommendations above (Table 1).</li> </ul>

### What is the guidance for contact tracing for exposed students?

Notify parent or guardian of students of known exposure. Recommend COVID-19 testing 3-5 days after last known exposure. Monitor students for any COVID-19 like symptoms. Encourage masking for exposed students.

### How do I report an outbreak?

You must contact the local health department immediately but no longer than 48 hours after you become aware of three (please note: Riverside County Public Health requires you to report every individual positive COVID-19 case within 24 hours of notice via SPOT portal. [Home \(ca.gov\)](#)) or more COVID-19 cases for guidance on preventing the further spread of COVID-19 within the workplace.

You must provide to the local health department the total number of COVID-19 cases and for each COVID-19 case, the name, contact information, occupation, workplace location, business address, the hospitalization and/or fatality status, and North American Industry Classification System code of the workplace of the COVID-19 case, and any other information requested by the local health department. You should continue to give notice to the local health department of any subsequent COVID-19 cases at the workplace.

### What to do when there is an outbreak among staff?

During an outbreak, a school (employer) must do the following:

- Exclude all COVID-19 positive staff.
- Immediately make COVID-19 testing available to its employees within the exposed group, and then again one week later; and continue to make tests available to employees at least weekly until the workplace no longer qualifies as an outbreak, i.e. there are no new COVID-19 cases detected in the exposed group for a 14-day period. However, an employer need not make testing available to employees who were absent from the workplace during the relevant 14-day period or who recently recovered from COVID-19 and do not have symptoms (returned cases).
- Ensure all employees who had close contacts and remain at work take a COVID-19 test within three to five days after the close contact and exclude from the workplace employees who test positive for COVID-19 test. Exclude employees who do not take a COVID-19 test within 3 to 5 days after the close contact until the return-to-work requirements for COVID-19 cases are met. Please see [the CDPH Isolation & Quarantine section of this FAQ](#) for information on when COVID-19 cases may return to work.

Please refer to [COVID-19 Emergency Temporary Standards Frequently Asked Questions \(ca.gov\)](#) for further information regarding requirements during an outbreak.

## REPORTING

### **When should school liaisons report student results to the Riverside University Health System – Public Health?**

School liaisons must report all COVID-19 positive cases to RUHS-PH through the SPOT Portal within 24 hours of becoming notified of the positive case. Parents/guardians should notify their student(s) school of positive result as soon as possible. Staff must notify their employers of positive COVID-19 test results as soon as possible.

### **Why do school liaisons need to enter cases in to SPOT Portal to report?**

- To meet the requirement by (RUHS-PH) of reporting all COVID-19 positive cases into the SPOT Portal.
- To help manage the requirement of tracking and managing outbreaks in their school settings.
- School Portal for Outbreak Tracking (SPOT) is to expand California’s contact tracing efforts by facilitating collaboration and sharing of information between schools, and RUHS-PH, using CalCONNECT, California’s public health contact tracing and data management system. SPOT is a safe and secure way to also report information to RUHS-PH.

### **If we opt into the Primary Health Reporting Platform and Parents enter their child’s test results, does the school still need to report through SPOT?**

Yes. The primary Health Platform allows for home test results to report to the state however it is not linked to the school and therefore the school will still need to report all cases through SPOT Portal [Home \(ca.gov\)](#) to remain in compliance with reporting.

### **Do we need a positive lab test result to report a positive case?**

No, but every positive result must be reported. Lab results are appreciated but not required. At home COVID-19 and lab test must be reported to RUHS-PH within 24 hours of notification via SPOT Portal [Home \(ca.gov\)](#).

### **Do schools still need to perform contact tracing?**

No, but tracing should still be done to track outbreaks and identify close contacts and notify exposed individuals per Cal/OSHA’s COVID-19 ETS as many requirements must be met if staff/volunteers are exposed to COVID-19 positive case, please see section, **“Do exposed individuals (regardless of vaccination) need to test after exposure?”**, [COVID-19 Emergency Temporary Standards Frequently Asked Questions \(ca.gov\)](#)

## VENTILATION

### Does CDPH have any documentation regarding indoor air quality and ventilation?

Yes. Please refer to [COVID-19 and Improving Indoor Air Quality in Schools \(ca.gov\)](#) for more information.

### Is ventilation a requirement?

Yes. Per Cal/OSHA's COVID-19 ETS, with some exceptions, requires the employer to maximize the use of outdoor air to the extent feasible. Cal/OSHA will consider the processes or environments necessary to perform the work when assessing feasibility. The employer should filter recirculated air with the highest filtration efficiency compatible with the ventilation system. A Minimum Efficiency Reporting Values, or MERV, of 13 or better is recommended.

Please refer to [COVID-19 Emergency Temporary Standards Frequently Asked Questions \(ca.gov\)](#) for all ventilation requirement information.