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.

The current definition of infectious period is as follows:

- For symptomatic confirmed cases, 2 days before the confirmed case had any symptoms (symptom onset date is Day 0) through Days 5-10 after symptoms first appeared AND 24 hours have passed with no fever, without the use of fever-reducing medications, and symptoms have improved.

  OR

- For asymptomatic confirmed cases, 2 days before the positive specimen collection date (collection date is Day 0) through Day 5 after positive specimen collection date for their first positive COVID-19 test.

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 can end isolation after Day 5 if symptoms are resolved or resolving and fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medication. If fever is present, isolation should be continued until 24 hours after fever resolves.
A well-fitted mask **must** be worn for the remainder of the 10-day isolation period. Staff may remove their mask sooner than Day 10 with two sequential negative tests, taken one day apart after Day 5. Please refer to CalOSHA's COVID-19 Prevention Non-Emergency Regulations: COVID-19 Prevention Non-Emergency Regulations (ca.gov)

Students: Isolation can end after Day 5 if symptoms are not present or are resolving and 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.

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- No, staff is no longer required to present proof of a negative COVID-19 test result before returning from isolation. Please refer to COVID-19 Prevention Non-Emergency Regulations (ca.gov) for additional testing information.

Student- No, students do not need to present proof of a negative COVID-19 test result before returning from isolation.

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.

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 30 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.

> **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 [What to Do If You Are Exposed to COVID-19 (ca.gov)](#).

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.](#)
- At-Home COVID-19 Tests for K-12 Students Form [At-Home COVID-19 Tests for K-12 Students · Starter Portal (powerappsportals.us)](#)
- CDPH Testing Section on School Hub – [https://schools.covid19.ca.gov/#testing](#)
- CDPH COVID-19 Testing Flyer - [What to Know for COVID-19 Testing (ca.gov)](#)

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.](#)

What are the current COVID vaccines and when should they be taken?

> Please refer to the CDPH COVID Vaccine Timing Guide: [IMM-1396_COVIDTimingChart-NewVaccinesv3_9-14-23 (eziz.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 from isolation, masking is required through Day 10. Staff can remove their mask before Day 10 with two sequential negative COVID-19 tests taken a day apart. For more information, please refer to Isolation and Quarantine Q&A (ca.gov).

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 When and Why to Wear a Mask (ca.gov).

OUTBREAK

What is an outbreak?

- At least three COVID-19 cases* within a 7-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, LHDs may determine that a higher proportion (at least 5%) of cases within a 7-day period may be sufficient for defining an outbreak, even in the absence of identifiable epidemiological linkages.

Please refer to Outbreak Definition and Reporting Guidance (ca.gov).

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)

Table 2: Close Contacts – (No Quarantine)

Asymptomatic Persons Who are Exposed to Someone with COVID-19 (No Quarantine)	Recommended Actions
Everyone, regardless of vaccination status. Persons infected within the prior 30 days do not need to be tested, quarantined, or excluded from work unless symptoms develop. Persons in healthcare settings** should follow recommendations and requirements as listed below.	• Test within 3-5 days after last exposure. • 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). • Strongly encouraged to be up to date with COVID-19 vaccines. • If symptoms develop, test, and stay home (see earlier section on symptomatic persons), AND • If test result is positive, follow isolation recommendations above (Table 1).

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 COVID-19 cases.
• 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 there are one or fewer new COVID-19 cases detected in the exposed group for a 14-day period, per section 3205.1(a)(2). 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. Exclude employees who do not take a COVID-19 test within three to five days after the close contact until the return-to-work requirements for COVID-19 cases are met.

Please refer to [COVID-19 Prevention Non-Emergency Regulations (ca.gov)](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)](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)](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 Prevention Non-Emergency Regulations as many requirements must be met if staff/volunteers are exposed to COVID-19 positive case, please see section, "**Addressing COVID-19 Cases in the Workplace**", [COVID-19 Prevention Non-Emergency Regulations (ca.gov)](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 Non-Emergency Regulations, 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 Prevention Non-Emergency Regulations (ca.gov) for all ventilation requirement information.

Please refer to the CDPH and Cal/OSHA guidance regarding ventilation, including Interim Guidance for Ventilation, Filtration, and Air Quality in Indoor Environments (ca.gov) for additional information.