

Protocols for Students in K-12 School Settings
Frequently Asked Questions
Riverside University Health System- Public Health

COMMON TERMS

1. What is the difference between quarantine and isolation?

- a. **Quarantine:** People who have been identified as having been in close contact with someone with COVID-19 are required to quarantine away from others because they may become infected with COVID-19 after their last contact with a person who had COVID-19 (see question 3 for options for duration of quarantine).
- b. **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.

2. What is the definition of a close contact?

A person is considered to be a **close contact** if they were within 6 feet of a person who was contagious with COVID-19 for a total of 15 minutes or more in a 24-hour period, regardless of if the exposure was indoors or outdoors.

3. What is group tracing?

In **group tracing**, the school identifies the students that shared a common indoor airspace with a person who was contagious for COVID-19. The school then provides notice to these students that they were part of an exposed group on a specific date, and that they should test within 3-5 days following that exposure. Students who participate in testing are permitted to remain in school and continue all school activities unless they develop symptoms or receive a positive test result.

GROUP-BASED TRACING, CLOSE CONTACTS, AND QUARANTINE

4. When using the Group-Tracing Approach, what should students notified of an exposure be told?

Schools should notify students who spent more than a cumulative total of 15 minutes (within a 24-hour time period) in a shared indoor airspace (e.g., classroom) with someone with COVID-19 during their period of infectiousness.

- a. Notification should occur to “groups” of exposed students (e.g., classmates, teammates, cohorts, etc.) rather than contact tracing to identify individual “close contacts” (e.g., those within 6 feet).
- b. Notifications should be provided to all individuals considered exposed, including those who are vaccinated and/or recently infected.

For example, if a student in tenth grade is diagnosed with COVID-19, the school should notify groups with whom that student interacted as per the criteria above, such as those in the same classes, sports team, and/or other extracurricular cohorts.

Notifications should highlight that the student may remain in school but shall get tested.

5. When should a close contact identified in “group tracing” be sent home?

- 1. Students should remain home if they have one or more of the symptoms associated with COVID-19, or test positive.

6. Is contact tracing required for students in outdoor settings?

Based on updated guidance from the CDPH, if a school opts to use group tracing, notifications should only be sent to students who spent more than a cumulative total of 15 minutes (within a 24-hour time period) in a shared **indoor** airspace.

7. Are students who are at least 14 days past completion of their primary COVID-19 vaccination series, or within 90 days of a prior lab-confirmed infection, exempt from the requirement that they test on Day 3, 4, or 5?

No. Per the CDPH guidance on [group tracing](#), when group tracing is used, all students who shared a common airspace with a person who was contagious with COVID-19 for 15 minutes or more in a 24 hour period are shall test on Day 3, 4, or 5 to remain in school. This includes students who are fully vaccinated and those who have recovered from a prior lab-confirmed infection within the last 90 days.

8. Are schools required to see evidence of negative test results from students who are required to test as part of an exposed group?

No. Schools are not required to track test results. Parents are expected to inform the school when their child tests positive or develops symptoms.

ISOLATION

9. If an individual returns after 5 days from isolation, are they able to engage in activities where they are unable to wear a face covering?

No. Students who return from isolation before Day 11 are required to wear a mask that fits snugly over their nose and mouth, indoors and outside when they are within 6 feet of others. Students should not participate in an activity where they are unable to wear a mask.

10. How should schools manage eating and drinking for students returning before 10 days of isolation?

Students who return from isolation before Day 11 are required to wear a mask that fits snugly over their nose and mouth indoors, and outside when they are within 6 feet of others on Days 6 through 10 from the onset of their symptoms. Schools should arrange for students to eat and drink outside with physical distancing.

11. Can students who return before 10 days of isolation participate in before- and after- school expanded learning and childcare programs?

Children who are permitted to return to school from isolation before Day 11 may participate in before and after-school expanded learning programs and childcare, however they must wear a mask that fits snugly over their nose and mouth indoors and when within 6 feet of others outside.

12. Can a student return before 10 days of isolation if they are unable or unwilling to wear a mask?

If a student is unable or unwilling to mask as required, they must continue isolation through the end of Day 10.

TESTING AND VACCINATION

13. Can at-home testing be used to satisfy testing requirement?

STUDENTS: Schools may accept the results of at-home testing 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.

14. Why should students test if its recommended but not required?

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.

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 having to quarantine. It reduces the chance that they might pass the virus on to others, thus impacting additional classmates and K-12 staff.

15. Do vaccinated, asymptomatic students need to test after exposure?

No, although it is recommended. Fully vaccinated students may remain in school and avoid interruptions to in-person education, even if they are exposed to someone with COVID-19, so long as they remain without symptoms.

16. What support is available to improve access to testing in schools?

- To request being placed on the waitlist for future at-home testing distribution, schools can email Judy.Taylor-Fischer@cdph.ca.gov.
- CDPH has multiple current programs which can help facilitate access to testing in the school testing.
- On-campus antigen testing is available at no cost. For details, see <https://testing.covid19.ca.gov/school-testing-rapid-testing/>. For support and/or questions, please email schoolbinax@cdph.ca.gov.

For full details on testing programs available to schools, see testing.covid19.ca.gov/school-testing

Over-The Counter Testing Information- [Over-The-Counter-Tests-LHJ-Guidance \(ca.gov\)](#)

COVID-19 Testing support- [Operational Support Options Flyer \(constantcontact.com\)](#)

17. 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 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](#)

18. How can schools possibly partner with Riverside County Public Health for on-campus vaccine clinics?

If your school or district is interested in partnering with us for vaccine clinics, please reach out to Misty Plumley at Mplumley@rivco.org or rivco-schools@ruhealth.org.

MASKING

19. When is masking required in K-12 schools?

Masking in K-12 schools is strongly recommended for both staff and students while indoors regardless of vaccination status. Masking is strongly recommended when returning between 6-10 days and after a known exposure.

20. Is masking required for school-based extracurricular activities?

The requirements and recommendations in this guidance apply to all extracurricular activities that are operated or supervised by schools, and all activities that occur on a school site, whether or not they occur during school hours, including, but not limited to, sports, band, chorus, and clubs.

Indoor mask use remains an effective layer in protecting against COVID-19 infection and transmission, including during sports, music, and related activities, especially activities with increased exertion and/or voice projection, or prolonged close face-face contact. Accordingly:

- Masks are strongly recommended indoors at all times for teachers, referees, officials, coaches, and other support staff.
- Masks are strongly recommended indoors for all spectators and observers.
- Masks are strongly recommended indoors at all times when participants are not actively practicing, conditioning, competing, or performing. Masks are also strongly recommended indoors while on the sidelines, in team meetings, and within locker rooms and weight rooms.
- When actively practicing, conditioning, performing, or competing indoors, masks are strongly recommended by participants even during heavy exertion, as practicable.
- Individuals using instruments indoors that cannot be played with a mask (e.g., wind instruments) are strongly recommended to use bell coverings and maintain a minimum of 3 feet of physical distancing between participants. If masks are not worn (or bell covers are not used) due to heavy exertion, it is strongly recommended that individuals undergo screening testing at least once weekly, unless they had COVID-19 in the past 90 days. An FDA-authorized antigen test, PCR test, or pooled PCR test is acceptable for evaluation of an individual's COVID-19 status.

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

There are a number of 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)

REPORTING

22. When should school liaisons report student results to the Local Health Department?

School liaisons should report positive cases and contacts to the LHD 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. Please visit the following link for more information [Case Reporting by Schools Directive](#)

23. Why do school liaisons need to enter cases in to SPOT to report?

The goal of the School Portal for Outbreak Tracking (SPOT) is to expand California’s contact tracing efforts by facilitating collaboration and sharing of information between schools, other entities and local health departments, using CalCONNECT, California’s public health contact tracing and data management system. SPOT is a safe and secure way to also report information to the LHJ.



24. 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 to be in compliance with reporting.

VENTILATION

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

Yes. Please refer to [COVID-19 and Improving Indoor Air Quality in Schools \(ca.gov\)](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/Improving-Indoor-Air-Quality-in-Schools.aspx) for more information.