Berrien County
Return to Learn:
Handouts for
Schools & Families

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Process for a Handling a COVID-19 Case at School

What happens when someone at school gets COVID-19?

Student/Staff is confirmed positive for COVID-19 with diagnostic test (nose/throat swab)

The school learns about the COVID+ case.

School district sends a general notification of COVID+ case to parents and staff, protecting confidentiality.

School district and health department work together to identify close contacts.

Close contacts are notified by the health department and placed into 14 day quarantine based on their last exposure.*

Close contact does not develop symptoms, completes quarantine period, and returns to school.***

The health department learns about the COVID+ case.

Health Department calls school designated contact.

Health department interviews the case and determines isolation period and any non-school contacts.

Case completes their isolation period ** and returns to school.***

The school learns about the COVID+ case.

School calls health department to report at 269-927-5667.

Student/Staff is confirmed positive for COVID-19 with diagnostic test (nose/throat swab)

** Isolation period lasts for 10 days since symptoms first appeared; AND 24 hours with no fever (without fever-reducing medication); AND symptoms have improved.

*** The health department will issue an official letter or other documentation releasing people from isolation or quarantine. Schools may use the letter to determine when to allow return to school.

*If someone is placed in quarantine, they may decide to get a COVID-19 test, but a negative result will NOT shorten the length of the quarantine period. Quarantine begins after the last exposure to an infectious person.

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DISCLAIMER: This information was developed based on the latest information, but is subject to change at any time.
COVID-19: Notification & Contact Tracing

1. What happens when someone at school gets COVID-19?

The school and health department learn about someone with COVID-19 (someone diagnosed with COVID-19 is a "case").

Only a select few at the school will know the identity of the person. They help the health department figure out who were close contacts to the case. The person’s identity is kept confidential to respect their privacy as well as following regulations of FERPA (for schools) and HIPAA (for the health department). The school will send a notification of the COVID-19 case to families and stakeholders.

2. Close contacts are identified and notified with quarantine instructions.

What is a close contact? It typically is someone who has been within 6 feet (about 2 arms’ length) of an infected person for at least 15 minutes.

A person with COVID-19 is considered contagious starting 2 days (48 hours) before they started having symptoms. If they never have symptoms, they are considered contagious starting 2 days (48 hours) before their COVID-19 test was performed.

Close contacts are at risk of getting sick, and must be identified and be quarantined. Quarantine separates people who were directly exposed to a contagious person to see if they become sick and to protect from further disease spread.

The health department will do all notification of close contacts.

...but what about contacts to close contacts?

Since close contacts are not yet known to be infectious, the people they have been in contact with do not need to be quarantined.

Example

Jackson sits next to Carlos in class. Carlos gets sick with COVID-19. Jackson needs to be quarantined, even though he is healthy at this time. Jackson plays on the football team, but Carlos does not. No one on the football team has been near Carlos. Therefore, the football team does not need to be quarantined. Hopefully, Carlos will not get sick and will be back to school and football in a couple of weeks.

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Cohorts Help to Limit Close Contacts

**Cohorts: Help keep close contacts to a minimum**

Cohorting strategies work by keeping groups of students – and sometimes staff – together over the course of a pre-determined period of time. Ideally, the students and staff within a cohort will only have physical proximity with others in the same cohort, for example, within a single classroom. Cohorting can help by:

- decreasing opportunities for exposure or transmission of COVID-19,
- reducing contact with shared surfaces,
- facilitating more efficient contact tracing in the event of a positive case, and
- allowing for targeted testing, quarantine, and/or isolation of a single cohort instead of school-wide measures in the event of a positive case or cluster of cases.

Cohorting can happen in several ways. For example:

- K-5 classes are kept together in one room; they eat lunch together and have recess together.
- Children riding the bus are given assigned seats, so they are always next to the same kids.
- Students moving from room to room keep a strict seating arrangement so close contacts remain consistent throughout each class period.

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How does COVID-19 spread?

**DROPLETS**
Respiratory droplets are small particles that enter the air when we cough, sneeze, laugh, sing, yell, and talk. Basically, they are little flecks of spit. Droplets tend to settle out of the air after traveling several feet from the person that released them. Droplets can also spread directly by kissing or sharing personal items like drinks, silverware, or other things that go from one person’s mouth to another.

We can reduce the spread of respiratory droplets to each other by wearing face coverings, avoiding large crowded groups, and staying more than 6 feet apart from each other.

**AEROSOLS**
Aerosols are even smaller particles that are created when we breathe, talk, sing, sneeze, or cough. They are lighter and can stay in the air much longer than respiratory droplets but dry up more quickly.

We can reduce the spread of aerosols by wearing a face covering, increasing outdoor air ventilation, or filtering air that is being recirculated.

**OBJECTS**
Objects can spread the COVID-19 virus when respiratory droplets or aerosols settle on them, leaving germs behind or if someone has the coronavirus on their hands from touching their nose or mouth then touches an object.

We can reduce the spread of COVID-19 through objects by frequent handwashing, not touching our faces, frequent cleaning and disinfection, and use of automatic or touchless controls.
Can I Send My Child To School?

Students should not go to school or any school activities or sports if having symptoms of COVID-19. If they start having symptoms of COVID-19 while at school, they will need to be sent home. They may return based on the guidance for their diagnosis.

As long as there are cases of COVID-19 in the community, there will be no way to prevent all risks of COVID-19 spread in schools. The goal is to keep children in optimal learning environments, while reducing COVID-19 risks.

STOP
If your child has been placed into isolation or quarantine for COVID-19, they may not attend school.

DOES YOUR CHILD HAVE SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19?*
(If new, different, or worse than any longstanding conditions)
- Temperature 100.4 or signs of fever (chills/sweating)
- Sore throat
- New uncontrolled cough that causes difficulty breathing
- Diarrhea, vomiting, or abdominal pain
- New onset of severe headache

If "YES" to any symptoms present, student should stay out of school until they meet criteria for return based on their symptoms.

Stay Home

OK to attend school

If "NO", student can go to school. Always monitor your child for symptoms before the start of the school day.

If you are asked to get a medical evaluation for your child, you may call your health care provider, or to follow up with a local clinic or urgent care center. While testing is not required, students may need to be excluded from in-person instruction for a longer period of time.

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If my child stays home or is sent home due to symptoms...

**HOW LONG MUST THEY STAY OUT OF SCHOOL?**

If your child has symptoms of COVID-19, and tests positive for COVID-19:

Keep out of school until it has been at least 10 days from the first day they had symptoms, they have had 24 hours with no fever (without fever reducing medications) and other symptoms have improved. There is no need to get a “negative test” or a doctor's note to clear the child to return to school if they meet these criteria set by the health department.

If your child has symptoms of COVID-19, has risk for exposure to COVID-19, and no testing has been done (or results are pending):

Keep out of school until it has been at least 10 days from the first day they had symptoms, they have had 24 hours with no fever (without fever reducing medications) and other symptoms have improved.

If your child has symptoms of COVID-19, has risk for exposure to COVID-19, and tests negative for COVID-19:

Your student may return based on the guidance for their symptoms (see “Managing Communicable Diseases in Schools”):
- **Fever**: at least 24 hours have passed with no fever, without the use of fever-reducing medications
- **Sore throat**: improvement in symptom (if strep throat: do not return until at least 2 doses of antibiotic have been taken);
- **Cough/Shortness of breath**: improvement in symptom
- **Diarrhea, vomiting, abdominal pain**: no diarrhea or vomiting for 24 hours
- **Severe headache**: improvement in symptom

If your child has symptoms of COVID-19, has no risk for exposure to COVID-19, and no testing is done:

Your student may return based on the guidance for their symptoms (see “Managing Communicable Diseases in Schools”) - see above for guidance on when they may return to school.

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