

## Local Health Department (LHD) Guidance K-12 Exposure and Quarantine

Governor Mike DeWine, recognizing that in-person classroom learning is critical for supporting the educational and social development of children and adolescents,\* has set a goal of reopening K-12 schools to in-person learning by March 1, 2021.

Although significant advancements have been made in offering remote learning to U.S. students during the COVID-19 pandemic, educational disparities may continue to widen in virtual learning models (AAP: <https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/covid-19-planning-considerations-return-to-in-person-education-in-schools/>).

With sustained COVID-19 transmission continuing across our state, schools, and public health systems must adapt to ensure that the continued development of students is accompanied by protections for the overall health and well-being of students, teachers, and staff in our communities.

All students and adults in K-12 schools who meet the definition of close contact of someone with COVID-19 should be notified of their exposure based on normal public health and school policies. Such notifications help ensure that families can make informed decisions for activities that occur outside of the classroom setting, including interaction with vulnerable populations. Students and their parents or guardians should be advised to restrict their activities outside of the classroom, including gatherings with individuals outside of their household and activities where face masks cannot be safely or effectively worn.

The below guidance can be used to address COVID-19 exposures in K-12 in-person learning environments. This guidance is supported by recent studies and pilot evaluations, including the [Ohio Schools COVID-19 Evaluation](#), which indicate that the risk of COVID-19 transmission in schools may be limited with strict adherence to [prevention measures](#) in a monitored environment.

Students and adults in K-12 schools may continue to attend in-person school if the following conditions are met:

- The school has documented [COVID-19 prevention policies](#), including universal mask wearing, social distancing, hand-washing, identification and management of students exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19, and routine environmental cleaning and disinfection protocols.
- The exposure occurred **within a classroom environment** or while on required school transport (e.g., school bus).
- The person with COVID-19 and any associated contacts were wearing face masks that covered their nose and mouth **at all times**.
  - If meals were consumed, a distance of at least 6 feet between students must have been maintained.
- Social distancing was maintained.
  - The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines acceptable distancing as a minimum of 6 feet. In accordance with the American Academy of Pediatrics, desks should be placed ideally 6 feet apart and at a minimum 3 feet apart. This may be considered for school quarantine considerations

[\(https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/covid-19-planning-considerations-return-to-in-person-education-in-schools/\)](https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/covid-19-planning-considerations-return-to-in-person-education-in-schools/).

- If transmission in the school has been identified, quarantine should be implemented for students and staff identified as close contacts. Schools should then work with their local health department to assess policies and procedures.

**The above guidelines only apply to classroom settings.** Students should not attend in-person school if they are exposed to COVID-19 outside the classroom, including during sports and other extracurricular activities, regardless of masking.

Close contacts who continue to attend in-person K-12 school should be advised to follow normal [protocols for quarantine](#) when outside the K-12 classroom environment, including staying home and, if possible, staying away from [people who are at higher risk severe illness](#) from COVID-19. During this quarantine period, students may not participate in extracurricular activities outside of a classroom environment, such as sports practices or games.

They should self-monitor for symptoms for 14 days following exposure. Any contact who develops symptoms should be isolated away from other students and adults and evaluated for COVID-19. Testing for SARS-CoV-2 may be recommended in coordination with the school, healthcare provider, or parents or guardians.

*Created Jan. 5, 2021.*

For more information on COVID-19, please visit [coronavirus.ohio.gov](https://coronavirus.ohio.gov).

For answers to your COVID-19 questions, call 1-833-4-ASK-ODH (1-833-427-5634).

**Your mental health is just as important as your physical health. If you or a loved one are experiencing anxiety related to the coronavirus pandemic, help is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Call the COVID-19 CareLine at 1-800-720-9616.**