

ACTION PLAN FOR A COVID-19 CASE IN A DANE COUNTY SCHOOL

This action plan is to be used by the staff member in a school who is responsible for contact tracing. This may be a school nurse or other staff member. Following this action plan is a recommendation from Public Health Madison & Dane County, not a requirement.

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Department of Health Services (DHS) School Testing Program

The DHS is offering free, convenient school-based testing for teachers, staff, students, and their families for the 2021-2022 school year. The testing program is intended to help K-12 public, private, and independent charter schools provide safe and healthy learning environments by connecting them with appropriate program vendors to meet their testing needs.

Regular COVID-19 testing can help support schools in making decisions about their efforts to protect the health and well-being of those in their buildings, such as universal and correct use of masks, maintaining adequate physical distance, isolation and quarantine, ventilation improvements, and thorough handwashing.

Please see the [DHS website](#) for additional information.

Vaccination

Schools should encourage all eligible staff, students, and family members to get vaccinated. Schools should establish a process for collecting, maintaining, and using COVID-19 vaccination information to inform selection and implementation of other prevention strategies, testing strategies, and to help inform quarantine guidance of close contacts.

Reporting Someone with COVID-19 & Contact Tracing

When should I report someone with COVID-19?

- Schools should report all individuals who have a positive test for COVID-19 to Public Health Madison & Dane County (Public Health). Report positive lab and at-home tests. Schools should only report individuals that have a positive test result and attended school while infectious and should not report close contacts exposed outside of school or suspected cases.
- Schools do not need to ask for documentation of the positive test result from staff or students. Schools should keep a list of all cases reported to Public Health (use template provided). You can request access to test result look-up in PHAVR by contacting dhswedss@wisconsin.gov with the subject "COVID lab look-up."
- Schools do not need to report probable cases without a positive test (note that this is different from Wisconsin Department of Health Services' guidelines to better support our local response).
- Students and staff who have symptoms of COVID-19 should be tested to confirm or rule out COVID-19. See the [Exclusion Table](#) for details.

What should I do if a student or employee has a positive test?

1. **Report the case to Public Health.** You do not need to ask for documentation of the positive test result.
 - a. If you have access to the Wisconsin Electronic Disease Surveillance System (WEDSS): Report the case to us through WEDSS.

- b. If you do not have access to the Wisconsin Electronic Disease Surveillance System (WEDSS):
 - i. [Request access](#). Request access by sending an email to the Wisconsin Division of Public Health WEDSS staff. Contact information is available on this website: www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/wiphin/wedss.htm. More than one person in a school/district can request access to WEDSS.
 - ii. In the meantime, report the positive case by calling Public Health at (608) 266-4821 and ask for the Communicable Disease Nurse on-call. You may leave a message, as our voicemail is confidential. In your message, include your contact information, your school, and the case's name and date of birth. We will gather information about the positive case and return the call within 1-2 business days (note this might not occur with all cases when Public Health is in crisis contact tracing due to a high burden of cases in Dane County).
- 2. Expect a call from a Public Health case investigator.** For all individuals reported by a school, a case investigator will contact the school within one to two days of receiving the report of a positive test. If you do not hear from the case investigator within two business days of initially reporting the case, call Public Health's Communicable Disease Nurse on-call at (608) 266-4821 (note this might not occur with all cases when Public Health is in crisis contact tracing due to a high burden of cases in Dane County).
- 3. Gather information related to the case.**
 - a. Determine whether the individual was on school grounds or used school transportation while infectious, working with Public Health as necessary.
 - b. Identify individuals who had close contact with the person who tested positive, both on school grounds and on school-related transportation. Record this information on the [provided line list](#) and share with your school's site investigator (see close contact definition on the bottom of page four below).
- 4. Contact employees and families of students identified as close contacts using the letter templates provided by Public Health.**
 - a. This letter will let them know they are a close contact and need to quarantine.
 - b. If you did not receive the letter templates, [please email us](#) to request them.
 - c. Public Health will not contact these individuals separately.
 - d. For confidentiality purposes, the individual who tested positive must not be identified in communications to the families, students and employees.
 - e. You are encouraged to send these letters as soon as possible. If you'd like to consult with us before sending letters, please wait for the case investigator to contact you as listed #2 above.
- 5. Notify families, as appropriate.**
 - a. For the first positive case of the 2021-2022 school year, you may wish to notify all families that someone in the school building tested positive and that close contacts are being notified. We have a template letter should your school wish to take this approach. This letter was provided directly to schools. If you need this template letter, [please email us](#).

- b. Schools do not need to notify all families about each case (please note this is different from Wisconsin Department of Health Services' guidelines to better support our local response).

A case lives outside of Dane County. How do I report this case?

If a case lives outside of Dane County, schools can still report the case via WEDSS or by calling the individual's [local health department](#). By reporting the case in WEDSS, the case will be referred to the individual's local health department.

Since the school building is located in Dane County, the school should still identify and notify close contacts. Schools should also contact the Public Health Communicable Disease Nurse on-call at (608) 266-4821 to report the case and arrange to send the line list of contacts ([see #3 in section above](#)). We will enter the contacts into WEDSS and individuals who live outside of Dane County will be referred to their local health department.

Positive Case Follow-Up

We receive notification of all positive cases within Dane County, except people who have a positive at-home test. When an individual tests positive at a testing center, pharmacy, or health care center, their health care provider, testing center, or Public Health will notify them of their positive test and isolation instructions.

Unfortunately, Public Health may not be able to follow up with all individuals who test positive. We will prioritize contacting individuals with a positive diagnosis over contact notification. We aim to have case investigators follow up with schools when the school reports a positive case, but due to a high burden of cases in Dane County and staff capacity, this might not occur with all cases when we are in crisis contact tracing. Therefore, your contact tracing and recommendations for quarantining will play a critical role in reducing disease transmission at school and in the community.

When is someone infectious?

Someone who *tested positive* is considered to be infectious from two days before symptom onset until they meet all of the following criteria: 24 hours fever free without fever-reducing medication, other symptoms are improving (but may still be present), and up to 10 days after symptom onset.

If the individual who *tested positive* does not have symptoms, they are considered to be infectious from two days before the test date until up to ten days after the test was collected.

I'll be doing contact tracing for my school. How can I get more training?

We recommend that the designated employee(s) responsible for contact tracing within the school/district take the free online [Johns Hopkins COVID-19 Contact Tracing Course](#) and review [DPI's contact tracing PowerPoint](#).

Close Contacts

How do I determine who is a close contact?

Schools are responsible for identifying and notifying close contacts that were on school grounds or school transportation. Public Health does not contact these same close contacts that were on school grounds or school transportation. Public Health works with families to identify and notify close contacts outside of the school setting.

An individual is considered a close contact if any of the following is true:

- **Students in a K-12 classroom setting:** Were within 3 feet of a positive person for more than 15 minutes total in a day. Both students must have been wearing well-fitting masks.
- **All other individuals, situations, and non-classroom settings:** Were within 6 feet of a positive person for more than 15 minutes total in a day
- Had physical contact with the person
- Had direct contact with the respiratory secretions of the people (i.e., from coughing, sneezing, contact with dirty tissue, shared drinking glass, food, or other personal items)
- Lives with or stayed overnight for at least one night in a household with the person

What do close contacts need to do?

If a student or employee had close contact with another student or employee who tested positive, the close contact should follow quarantine protocols on the [exclusion table](#). If a close contact has a positive test for COVID-19, they should follow the isolation protocols on the [exclusion table](#).

What is the CDC Close Contact Exception?

In the K-12 indoor classroom setting, the close contact definition excludes students who were within 3 to 6 feet of an infected student (laboratory-confirmed or clinically compatible illness) if both the infected student and exposed student(s) correctly and consistently wore well-fitting masks the entire time. This exception does not apply to teachers, staff, or other adults in the classroom settings or outside the classroom.

In other words, if two students in a K-12 indoor classroom were fully-masked and one tests positive, the other students who were masked and close contacts do not need to quarantine following exposure. They need to continue wearing their masks.

How long do close contacts need to quarantine?

The CDC has updated their quarantine guidance to 5 days. After 5 days, a well-fitting mask must be worn during days 6-10. If an individual cannot properly mask, they must quarantine for 10 days. It is up to the school or district to determine quarantine guidelines. You can either choose to have close contacts quarantine for 5 or 10 days after exposure. Even if a family chooses the 5 day quarantine option, the school or district can enforce the 10 day quarantine for attendance at their site.

When does a close contact *not* need to be excluded from school?

The following groups do not need to quarantine if they are identified as close contacts. They should wear a mask for 10 days after their last exposure and get tested at least 5 days after exposure if possible:

- Individuals who are 17 and under who completed a primary COVID vaccine series two or more weeks before the exposure
- Individuals 18 years or older who completed a primary COVID vaccine series two or more weeks ago and are not yet [eligible for a booster dose](#)
- Individuals 18 years or older who completed a primary COVID vaccine series two or more weeks ago and have received a booster dose

Individuals who were diagnosed with COVID in the 90 days before the exposure also do not need to quarantine. These individuals should not be tested after exposure and should wear a mask for 10 days after their last exposure.

Determining close contacts in the K-12 environment

	>6 feet, all locations		3-6 feet in classroom		3-6 feet, non-classroom		<3 feet, all locations	
Student								
Staff								

Not a close contact: No notification or quarantine required

Close contact: Notification required, quarantine required if not in one of the exception groups above

What can help me identify possible close contacts easier?

For a classroom or school transportation, a closed cohort model (where classrooms do not mix) and/or assigned seating will make it easier to identify close contacts and limit the number of people potentially exposed. It may be difficult for students to both maintain 3-6 feet of distance and to recall close contacts. Therefore, if school staff cannot identify close contacts in a classroom or on school transportation, the entire classroom/school bus would be required to quarantine. If close contacts in the classroom/school bus are known, then only those identified as close contacts would be required to quarantine.

How should I separate sick and well students?

We recommend that schools have a room or space separate from the health office, where students or employees (if the employee cannot leave right away) who may have COVID-19 wait to be evaluated or picked up.

Only essential employees and students assigned to the room should enter, everyone should sign-in and out so that there is a record of the people who entered the room. The room should be disinfected several times throughout the day if it is being used. Everyone should maintain physical distancing and: employees should wear [appropriate PPE](#), as defined by CDC.

Students who are ill should be walked out of the building to their parent or guardian.

What if a student tests positive and has siblings or other students in their household?

- If a student has a positive COVID-19 test, their siblings or other students living in the same household would be required to quarantine because they are a close contact unless they are in one of the exception groups above.
- If the close contact is unable to have complete separation from the student or person who had a positive COVID test, quarantine starts after the person who tested positive ends their isolation.
- If the close contact is able to completely separate from the person who tested positive, they start quarantine after last contact with the person who tested positive.
- If this household member eventually has a positive test, they will then follow the COVID-19 isolation guidelines for a person with a positive test.

When can someone come back after being isolated or quarantined?

For information on COVID-19 like symptoms, exclusion criteria, and when to return, please refer to the [exclusion table](#).

Closing a Building

When might a school building close?

On a case-by-case basis, Public Health will review outbreak data and several factors (including but not limited to number of positive cases, extent of exposure, and contact tracing capacity) and will make a recommendation about closure at a school or district level. According to [WI statute 252.02](#), the Wisconsin Department of Health Services has authority to close schools. If it is necessary, we will consult with the Wisconsin Department of Health Services about possible mandated school closures.

Schools and district administrators may also choose to close their schools and districts based on impediments to school functioning, such as high absenteeism and staff shortages.

Resources & More Information

Other Key Public Health Madison & Dane County Resources

- Fact Sheet: [Q&A about Schools that have someone with COVID-19 \(in Spanish\)](#)
- Webpage: [What to Do If an Employee is Sick or was Possibly Exposed \(in Spanish\)](#)
 - Includes scenarios that are relevant to both employees and also students.
- Webpage: [What to Do if You are Sick or Possibly Exposed \(in Spanish\)](#)
 - [Factsheet and quarantine calculator](#) on what to do if someone lives with another person who has COVID-19
- Webpage: [Testing in Dane County](#)
- Webpage: [Vaccination in Dane County](#)

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction & Wisconsin Department of Health Services Resources

For general school guidance, reference the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction's (DPI) [Education Forward Resource](#). For COVID-19 information specific to health services, reference [DPI's School Health Services](#).

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services has also published [Guidelines for the Prevention, Investigation, and Control of COVID-19 Outbreaks in K-12 Schools in Wisconsin](#). We will generally follow these guidelines with several exceptions to better support our local response:

1. Public Health does not follow close contacts throughout their isolation or quarantine periods to determine when they can return to activities. We provide instructions to individuals about how to make that determination on their own.
2. Schools do not need to call Public Health if they have three people report respiratory symptoms within 72 hours.

These exceptions are consistent with the guidelines that we have been using for case and contact follow-up throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to these exceptions, other details may vary such as suggested communication processes, specific information requested, etc.

For [DHS definitions of COVID-19 cases](#) reference the “Reporting and Surveillance Guidance” under “Physical Health and Safety Guidance”.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

DHS and Public Health Madison & Dane County guidelines and practices are based on recommendations from the CDC’s [Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools](#).