

## Jefferson County Public Health COVID-19 School Setting Guidance

February 11, 2022

**Jefferson County Public Health (JCPH) continues to recommend that the best protection against severe complications from COVID-19 and the best approach to maintain in-person learning and childcare is to get vaccinated AND received a booster dose if you are eligible.** Please assist JCPH in continuing to share this message and encourage your entire staff, student body, and families to get vaccinated and boosted if eligible. **Mask wearing is also an integral component to help suppress transmission of COVID-19** and other infectious respiratory diseases.

*In this document, “school setting” includes all public and private schools, childcare settings, other educational settings for children, and higher education.*

- These updated quarantine recommendations were developed following the rescinding of Jefferson County PHO 21-006.
- JCPH has provided school settings with an option related to quarantine so they can adopt what is best in their environment.
- Reducing risk for COVID transmission in school settings is a shared responsibility with schools and parents, guardians and/or caregivers.
- Maintain clear communication with parents/guardians about COVID-19 cases in your facility to help them make individual choices on mask use and quarantine for their children.
- Ensure school nurses and staff responsible for COVID-19 response are communicating with school leadership/owners to coordinate on how this guidance will be operationalized in the school setting.
- Ensure access to adequate remote learning for parents/guardians who choose to keep children out after an exposure or for isolation.
- Promote and maintain a supportive environment for students or staff who continue to wear masks as a personal choice.
- While mask use is no longer mandated, they are still recommended by the CDC and CDPHE as a measure to reduce the risk of transmission in school settings. JCPH endorses this guidance especially in circumstances when a person chooses to wear one or in facilities that choose to continue to require mask use. Persons who are at higher risk for severe outcomes from COVID-19 infection or persons otherwise concerned about being exposed to COVID-19 are especially encouraged to wear a well-fitted mask as well when indoors in school or other public settings.
- JCPH requires that the school setting must notify JCPH of positive COVID-19 cases and outbreaks (see below for definition of a COVID-19 outbreak).
- JCPH may require additional mitigation measures when there is evidence of uncontrolled transmission or for investigations that require more stringent control measures.

### JCPH COVID-19 Protocol for Isolation (REQUIRED)

#### **Isolation Definition:**

Isolation is required pursuant to the legal authority set forth in C.R.S § 25-1.5-102(1) and § 25-1-506(3)(b). The terms of the requirement are set forth by the CDC and CDPHE:

- [Isolation](#) is for those who have tested positive using any diagnostic COVID-19 test for COVID-19 or developed symptoms after a COVID-19 exposure.
  - Those required to isolate **must** do so for a minimum of 5 days. Day 0 is considered the date of either symptom onset or the date of the positive test collection.
  - Earliest eligible return is on day 6 if the person has been fever-free for 24 hours (without the use of fever reducing medication) and there has been significant improvement of symptoms.
  - JCPH strongly recommends wearing a well-fitted mask for persons aged 3 and older for an additional 5 days.
  - Diagnostic COVID-19 test: a test that detects a current COVID-19 infection. These tests include PCR, rapid molecular, and antigen tests. Serology (antibody) tests can check for evidence of past infection or vaccination but cannot tell if a person currently has COVID-19 and are therefore not considered diagnostic tests.
  - JCPH requires that the school setting must notify JCPH of positive COVID-19 cases.

### JCPH COVID-19 Protocol for Quarantine (SEE DEFINITIONS)

#### **Quarantine Guidance Definitions:**

JCPH provides the school setting with measures to help reduce the risk of transmission in their facility. School settings have the option to use the guidance based on the facility's assessment of the setting in which cases are occurring. There are certain instances of required quarantine detailed below.

#### **Quarantine Definition:**

- Quarantine can be required pursuant to the legal authority set forth in C.R.S § 25-1.5-102(1) and § 25-1-506(3)(b). The terms of the requirement are set forth by the CDC and CDPHE:
  - [Quarantine](#) is for close contacts of a person who has tested positive for COVID-19.
    - Those required to quarantine must do so for 5 full days, to include wearing a mask during this time. Day 0 is considered the day of the final exposure to a positive case. Quarantined people can return to routine activities on 6th day if they have stayed symptom free, but must continue to wear a mask for an additional 5 full days.
    - Close contacts in a school setting are defined as being within 3 feet of a person who has tested positive for COVID-19 for a cumulative 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period during the positive cases' infectious period when either the infectious and/or exposed person was not properly wearing a mask.
    - Household contacts: Household exposures often mean that the remaining members of the household are continuously exposed to the virus during the entire isolation period. The unvaccinated student/staff that has a household exposure cannot start their quarantine until the isolation period has ended for all positive household members.
    - See below for definition of exemption of quarantine criteria.

**Quarantine for persons who meet criteria as a close contact from an exposure in a school setting:**

JCPH recommends:

Regardless of whether quarantine is instituted, encourage testing at least once during the first 5-days after the exposure, watch for symptoms, and if symptoms develop the person should stay home and get tested.

- For persons aged 3 years and older:
  - 5-day quarantine for persons who are a close contact to someone with COVID-19 AND do not meet the criteria for no quarantine.
  - Wear a well-fitted mask for persons aged 3 years and older for 10 days after the exposure when you are within the school setting.
- For persons aged less than 3 years:
  - 10-day quarantine for persons who are a close contact to someone with COVID-19 AND do not meet the criteria for no quarantine.

**Quarantine for persons who meet criteria as a close contact from an exposure in a school setting in an outbreak:**

JCPH requires:

- JCPH requires that the school setting must notify JCPH of positive COVID-19 cases and outbreaks (see below for definition of a COVID-19 outbreak).
- For persons aged 3 years and older:
  - 5-day quarantine for persons who are a close contact to someone with COVID-19, unless the person meets quarantine exemption criteria.
  - JCPH recommends that persons aged 3 years and older wear a well-fitted mask for 10 days after the exposure when you are within the school or childcare setting, if not required to quarantine.
- For persons aged less than 3 years:
  - 5-day quarantine for persons who are a close contact to someone with COVID-19, unless the person meets criteria for no quarantine.
  - 10-day quarantine is recommended for this age group.
  - Encourage testing at least once during the first 5-days after the exposure.
  - Watch for symptoms. If symptoms develop, stay home and get tested.

**If an exposed person meets any of these criteria below, then no quarantine is necessary.**

- Is aged 5-11 years and has completed the primary COVID-19 vaccine series at least 14 days prior to exposure, Or
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- Is aged 12+ years and is up to date on all recommended COVID-19 vaccine doses (including a booster dose if 5+ months after mRNA vaccines or 2+ months after Johnson & Johnson vaccine), Or
- Had a positive COVID-19 test (documented PCR or antigen test) in past 90 days, Or
- Participating in a continual weekly screening testing program and will continue to participate for at least 2 additional weeks, Or
- Participating in an established post-exposure, Test-to-Stay program.
- No quarantine is necessary if an exposure occurred in a routine classroom setting and both the infected individual and the exposed individual were wearing well-fitting masks correctly and consistently over the mouth and nose during the exposure.

*Note: Recommendations for testing, symptom monitoring, and mask use remain the same.*

**Out-of-school setting exposure:**

For persons who meet criteria as a close contact from an exposure outside the school setting, continue to follow guidance for the general public. These persons should quarantine for 5-days unless they meet the criteria for no quarantine; watch for symptoms; get tested during the 5-days after the exposure; and wear a well-fitted mask for persons aged 3 years and older for 10 days after the exposure when you are within the school setting.

**JCPH Best Practice Recommendations for School Settings:**

- Mask use is still required on public transportation (e.g., school buses) by federal rule.
- Continue to communicate messaging on staying home when sick and ensure compliance with facility illness exclusion policies.
- Get vaccinated for COVID-19.
- Promote handwashing.
- While mask use is no longer mandated, they are still recommended by the CDC and CDPHE as a measure to reduce the risk of transmission in school settings. JCPH endorses this guidance especially in circumstances when a person chooses to wear one or in facilities that choose to continue to require mask use. Persons who are at higher risk for severe outcomes from COVID-19 infection or persons otherwise concerned about being exposed to COVID-19 are especially encouraged to wear a well-fitted mask as well when indoors in school or other public settings.
- Eat in classrooms or outside.
  - If eating in classrooms, maximize ventilation by opening windows if able or utilizing a [Box Fan Air Filter](#).
  - If eating in classrooms is not feasible implement other means of avoiding crowded lunchrooms
    - Pre-plate lunches to avoid crowding in line
    - Stagger lunch periods to reduce numbers of students in each lunch period
    - Increase distancing between lunch tables to achieve 6ft distancing between students
- Cohort to the greatest extent possible.
- Implement a COVID-19 symptom screening protocol, to include temperature checks, before entering the building.
- Increase ventilation in spaces to the maximum extent possible.
  - Work with facilities staff to ensure that the building's HVAC system is cycling at least 6 times per hour.
  - Utilize a [Box Fan Air Filter](#).
- Social Distancing: 6ft is the preferred distancing due to highly transmissible nature of omicron.
- Testing on day 5 after exposure before returning to the school setting.
- Any questions or concerns about returning to the school setting with any illness symptoms, consult school nurse or your health care provider.
- Students can come back to classroom on day 6 if they are asymptomatic but should return on day 6 to high-risk activities only if they test negative on or after day 5. This can be any viral test.
  - Viral tests include rapid tests and nucleic acid amplification tests.
- Temporarily cancelling or moving to remote highest-risk activities in outbreak situations.
- Plan for remote learning and school setting closures in the event that a high number of staff are out with illness, and the school setting cannot safely operate.

**JCPH Best Practice Recommendations for High-Risk Individuals in School Settings:**

- While mask use is no longer mandated, they are still recommended by the CDC and CDPHE as a measure to reduce the risk of transmission in school settings. JCPH endorses this guidance especially in circumstances when a person chooses to wear one or in facilities that choose to continue to require mask use. Persons who are at higher risk for severe outcomes from COVID-19 infection or persons otherwise concerned about being exposed to COVID-19 are especially encouraged to wear a well-fitted mask as well when indoors in school or other public settings.
- Be up to date on the COVID-19 vaccination.
- Utilize a tight-fitting face mask such as a KN95 or N95 if appropriate.
- Strong adherence to personal hygiene, to include frequent hand washing breaks and use of an alcohol base hand sanitizer where appropriate.
- Maximize spacing for social distancing.
- Allow high risk individuals to consume lunch in a location that allows for maximum spacing and air flow.
- Continue to use all best practices and required protocols for COVID-19 mitigation.
- Contact JCPH for an individualized consultation with JCPH's infectious disease epidemiologist team.
- Suggest for caregivers and staff to consult with primary care physicians for individual risk assessments.
- Support individual families and staff who may choose a 10-day isolation or extended quarantine based upon their individual risks and comfort level.
- Remind individuals that these recommendations should be adhered both in and outside of the school setting.
- [CDC Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools](#)

**Outbreaks in School Settings:**

- Outbreak definition in a school setting: Five or more confirmed or probable cases of COVID-19, of which at least one case has had a positive molecular amplification test or antigen test performed by a CLIA-certified provider, among students/teachers/staff from separate households with onset within 14 days.
- Closure, universal masking, and revised quarantine recommendations will be reviewed by JCPH and school setting leadership on an individual basis in the event of an outbreak

**Helpful Links:**

- [Who needs to Quarantine](#)
- [Practical Guidance for Operationalizing CDC's School Guidance](#)