

Return to School:

A guide to responding to
COVID-19 cases in
K-12 school settings.
2022-2023

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Fresno County Department of Public Health.



Return to School: A guide to responding to COVID-19 cases in K-12 school settings

The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) has updated its K-12 COVID-19 school guidance recommendations for 2022-2023.

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/K-12-Guidance-2022-23-School-Year.aspx>

As in prior years, the Fresno County Department of Public Health (FCDPH) supports and follows the CDPH K-12 guidance, including the recommendations in the following areas:

- **Staying Up to Date on Vaccinations-** Now available to everyone 6 months and older.
- **Optimizing Indoor Air Quality-** With updated ventilation systems and using HEPA filters in smaller enclosed spaces when facemasks may not be in use, such as in staff lounges.
- **Using Facemasks-** Particularly high-quality and well-fitting face masks, such as KN94s or KN95s.
- **Getting Tested for COVID-19-** Specifically prior to returning to school or when sick. Schools are not required to perform testing of asymptomatic students and staff who may be at higher risk, either because of their activities or because they were close contacts of COVID-19 positive individuals.
- **Maintaining Clean Hands**
- **Managing Individuals with Symptoms-** The FCDPH expects all schools to advise all students and staff in writing and in signage posted conspicuously in well-traveled locations to stay home if sick. Students and staff who have symptoms should stay home and isolate until they are tested and are cleared by isolation guidance or identification of another medical cause.
- **Reporting COVID-19 disease burden to local health authorities-** Schools should refer to Title 17, 2500 and 2508 regarding reporting of communicable diseases, and the State Public Health Officer Order of February 10th, 2022, which states that health care providers conducting point of care testing must report test results, consistent with the requirements for laboratories. The FCDPH recommends that schools maintain the capacity for point of care testing to facilitate access to testing for students and staff who otherwise might have difficulty obtaining timely testing or who have symptoms.

In consideration of these regulations and the substantial reporting burden created by COVID-19, the FCDPH recommends all schools continue to monitor self-reported COVID-19 student or staff COVID-19 positives to be able to detect on-campus spread. Schools are not expected to report to the FCDPH if a student or staff self-reports that they are COVID-19 positive, but it is recommended that schools report through the SPOT portal when they are aware that 10% or more of students and staff in a shared air space meet

the requirement to isolate while positive for COVID-19 and when it is suspected that the cases are epidemiologically linked. The FCDPH also recommends that schools notify the FCDPH through the SPOT portal when a classroom is closed because of COVID-19.

- **Managing Students Diagnosed with COVID-19-** Follow the CDPH guidance for isolation and quarantine for the general public, which does not require quarantining for close contacts. Contact tracing and quarantining of close contacts is still recommended for medically fragile students living in congregate settings. Cal/OSHA Emergency Temporary Standards (Cal/OSHA ETS) applies when considering isolation and quarantine for employees (staff and volunteers).
- **Managing Students Exposed to COVID-19:** Includes notification of students exposed in school settings, while considering providing a general notification to the entire school community during times of elevated community transmission.
- **Managing COVID-19 Outbreaks-** If a school suspects transmission is occurring in a classroom or an activity, it is recommended that the school consider classroom or activity closure as a “last resort” (per CDPH guidance) based on risk of ongoing transmission. For outbreaks involving staff, refer to Cal/OSHA ETS. The FCDPH recommends consulting with FCDPH prior to classroom closures and FCDPH will continue to monitor cases and outbreaks reported through SPOT, however FCDPH will not manage outbreaks of COVID-19 unless or until schools request additional assistance for mitigating COVID-19 on campuses. The FCDPH recommends schools report through the SPOT portal when 10% or more of students in a shared air space are COVID-19 positive, and when there is a classroom closure.
- **Cleaning Facilities-** Noting that routine cleaning is enough to sufficiently remove the virus that causes COVID-19 from surfaces.

All of the CDPH school guidance is framed as recommendations, with the exception of the requirement that no one who wants to wear a mask be restricted from doing so, and the expectation that all schools be able to provide masks to students who inadvertently fail to bring a face covering to school and desire to use one. The CDPH and FCDPH affirms the authority of local health departments and local educational agencies to maintain or establish additional guidance, including required actions, for K–12 school settings in their respective jurisdictions. When making a determination of whether additional measures are warranted to mitigate in-school transmission of COVID-19, the CDPH and FCDPH recommend local health and education officials confer and review this guidance.

The FCDPH also notes that COVID-19 continues to circulate in our communities and schools, fueled by extremely communicable variants that can infect and reinfect anyone and disrupt normal operations, particularly in crowded indoor settings such as schools. COVID-19 is expected to remain in our communities. The CDPH and FCDPH affirms the authority of local educational agencies to maintain or establish additional guidance, including required actions, for K-12 school settings in their respective jurisdictions.

The following sections provide more specific guidance for Fresno County K-12 schools when responding to COVID-19 related scenarios. The FCDPH also advises schools to prepare plans for remote instruction for students who may need to isolate, or in the event of class or school closures related to outbreaks. This document is applicable to all K-12 schools, public or private, throughout Fresno County.

The following guidance is included in this document:

- COVID-19 Prevention and Best Practices
- COVID-19 School Scenario Guidance
- Considerations when Assessing COVID-19 Exposure

We will continue to revise these documents as necessary and as guidance from the CDPH and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is updated, in particular:

- [Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools | CDC](#)
- [K-12 Guidance 2022-23 School Year \(ca.gov\)](#)
- [Guidance for the Use of Face coverings \(ca.gov\)](#)
- [CalOSHA Emergency Temporary Standards \(ETS\)](#)
- [COVID-19 Emergency Temporary Standards Frequently Asked Questions \(ca.gov\)](#)

COVID-19 Prevention & Best Practices for Schools

Fresno County Department of Public Health's Best Practices

- Post or perform screening for recent COVID-19 positive close contact or COVID-19 symptoms for all students upon entry into first classroom of the day, AND for all staff, volunteers, or others when entering school buildings.
- All students and staff should STAY HOME if sick and get tested or evaluated for COVID-19.
- Strongly encourage a well-fitting mask such as a KN95 while on school property or at school-sponsored events and buses for all students, teachers, staff, volunteers, etc.
- Encourage respecting and supporting personal choice regarding whether or not to wear face coverings.
- Encourage all students and staff to be fully vaccinated.
- Availability of hand sanitizer at all entrances and commonly visited locations.
- Encourage physical distancing in all indoor and outdoor settings when feasible, particularly when unable to wear face coverings such as while eating in cafeterias.
- Assess and address adequacy of ventilation in all indoor school settings.
- Maximize space between students and between students and the driver on school buses, and open windows and keep air circulation open to outside air to the greatest extent practicable.
- Maintain capacity for isolation of symptomatic students in a room with a separate entrance when students are on campus, with staff having appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) immediately available.
- Routine cleaning all high use surfaces.
- Consider classroom or extra-curricular activity closure in consultation with the FCDPH if in-classroom or extra-curricular transmission of COVID-19 is suspected.

Guidelines for COVID-19 Exposure Scenarios for Schools

This following is guidance for steps to take in response to confirmed and suspected positive cases on your school campus.

Scenario	Response and Isolation Steps	Communication and Contact Tracing Steps
1. Student has tested positive for COVID-19.	<p>Per the CDPH,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay home for at least 5 days. • Isolation can end after day 5 if symptoms are not present or are resolving and a diagnostic specimen* collected on day 5 or later tests negative. • If unable to test or choosing not to test, and symptoms are not present or are resolving, isolation can end after day 10. • If fever is present, isolation should be continued until fever resolves. • If symptoms, other than fever, are not resolving continue to isolate until symptoms are resolving or until after day 10. • Wear a well-fitting mask around others for a total of 10 days, especially in indoor settings (see Section below on masking for additional information). <p>*Antigen test preferred. If asymptomatic, the minimum 5-day isolation period begins on the date the student is tested. If symptomatic, day 0 is the day the symptoms begin.</p> <p>If symptoms persist beyond 10 days, student to remain at home until at least 1 day after symptoms have resolved without the use of medication.</p> <p>Identify locations where the index case spent more than 15 minutes over a 24-hour period in the two days prior to the day the positive test was collected OR to symptom onset: classroom, library, cafeteria, school bus, etc. If these locations have not been cleaned and disinfected since the student was present, close off areas used by the person who is sick and do not use those areas until after cleaning and disinfecting, wait as long as possible (at least several hours) before you clean and disinfect.</p>	<p>A note from a clinician is not required in order for a student who follows this guidance to return to school.</p> <p>Notify the FCDPH liaison if 10% or more of students in a shared air space, such as a classroom are isolating because of COVID-19 when the cases are epidemiologically linked, (minimum of 3 positive cases within 14 days), and consider next steps in consultation with the FCDPH and,</p> <p>Notify students, parents and staff in the shared air space classroom or activity of a new positive case. Notification to indicate the date the school was aware of the positive case without releasing information that would identify whether the positive case was a student or staff member or what grade or class was involved.</p> <p>Consider providing a general notification to the entire school community during times of elevated community transmission.</p>
2. Teacher or staff person or volunteer (school employee) is a close contact.		<p>Follow Cal/OSHA ETS guidance for close contacts:</p> <p>COVID-19 Prevention Emergency Temporary Standards - Fact Sheets, Model Written Program and Other Resources (ca.gov)</p>
3. Student becomes ill off school campus and is waiting for test results.	<p>Student to isolate as described in #1. OK to return to school if test negative for COVID-19 (PCR or rapid antigen) AND symptoms have resolved for at least one day, OR if test negative for COVID-19 (PCR or rapid antigen) AND symptoms do not include fever, cough, or shortness of breath, OR if a licensed health care provider determines that symptoms are not new, or worsening based on a chronic</p>	<p>If test positive, follow guidance in #1</p>

	<p>medical condition OR if a licensed health care provider has made an alternative diagnosis based on a diagnostic test such as a positive strep screen or a positive screen for influenza.</p> <p>If test positive, follow guidance in #1.</p>	
4. Student develops COVID-19 symptoms while at school.	<p>Place student in isolation room with separate entrance until transported home or to higher level of care. More than one student may be placed in isolation room if all masked and physically distanced as much as possible. If unable to maintain six feet distance from index case, staff person with full PPE (N95 or higher mask, goggles/eye protector, gown, and gloves) must be immediately available to evaluate or assist student if necessary or arrange for prompt transfer to appropriate level of care.</p> <p>Student may be accompanied while moving from classroom or other school site to isolation room by staff person with face covering AND observing physical distancing protocols. If closer contact required, staff person with full PPE must accompany child to isolation room.</p> <p>Isolation room to be cleaned and sanitized after symptomatic student leaves. Room cannot be re-used until cleaning and disinfecting completed.</p> <p>Student to isolate as described in #1. OK to return to school if test negative for COVID-19 (PCR) AND symptoms have resolved for at least one day, or if test negative for COVID-19 with either PCR or rapid antigen and evaluated by a licensed health care provider AND symptoms have resolved for at least one day without the use of medication OR if a licensed health care provider determines that symptoms are not new, or worsening based on a chronic medical condition OR if a licensed health care provider has made an alternative diagnosis based on a diagnostic test such as a positive strep screen or a positive screen for influenza.</p>	<p>Recommend student follow up with physician, nurse practitioner, or other licensed medical professional practicing under the license of a physician for evaluation and testing.</p> <p>Notify classroom teacher and advise teacher to monitor other students for symptoms.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If 10% or more of students in a shared air space have confirmed or suspected cases in a classroom, assess likelihood of in-class transmission and consider next steps. The FCDPH expects all schools to report when they are aware that 10% or more of students in a shared air space meet the requirement to isolate while positive for COVID-19. <p>If student tests positive for COVID-19, follow guidance in #1.</p>
5. Member of student's household tests positive.		Household contacts ok to continue attending school if asymptomatic while continuing to monitor for symptoms, with testing 3-5 days after exposure recommended.
6. Teacher or staff or volunteer (school employee) tests positive.	Follow Cal/OSHA ETS.	Follow Cal/OSHA ETS guidance for others subject to Cal/OSHA. Follow guidance in Scenario #1 for others not subject to Cal/OSHA who are close contacts in the two days prior to the day the positive test was collected OR to symptom onset, up to the time the teacher or staff or volunteer was last in shared air space.

		<p>School to send notification letter to all close contacts subject to Cal/OSHA.</p> <p>If 10% or more of students in a shared air space have confirmed or suspected cases in a classroom, assess likelihood of in-class transmission and consider next steps in consultation with the FCDPH.</p> <p>If no violations of local or state health officer orders for isolation, quarantine, or exclusion would result, the local health jurisdiction may, upon request to the FCDPH, allow employees, who otherwise would be excluded from work to return to work on the basis that the removal of the employee would create undue risk to a community's health and safety. In such cases, the employer shall develop, implement, and maintain effective control measures to prevent transmission in the workplace including providing isolation for the employee at the workplace, and if isolation is not feasible, the use of respirators in the workplace.</p> <p>Notify students and parents in shared air space not subject to Cal/OSHA ETS of a new positive case as described in #1 above.</p>
7. Teacher or staff or volunteer (school employee) has symptoms.	Follow Cal/OSHA ETS and #9 for school employees who either test positive for COVID-19 or are awaiting evaluation for COVID-19 symptoms unless a licensed health care professional determines the person's symptoms were caused by a known condition other than COVID-19. COVID-19 symptoms include fever of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher, chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, or diarrhea.	
8. Student feels ill with COVID-19 symptoms, but parent/guardian will NOT be testing child.	Follow guidance in Scenario #1.	<p>Household contacts to follow guidance as described in #5.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If 10% or more of students in a shared air space have confirmed or suspected cases in a classroom, assess likelihood of in-class transmission and consider

		<p>next steps. The FCDPH expects all schools to report when they are aware that 10% or more of students in a shared air space meet the requirement to isolate while positive for COVID-19.</p>
<p>9. Student tests negative but has COVID-19 symptoms (possible false negative).</p>	<p>Student to remain at home while symptoms persist consistent with screening protocols at school. Ok to return to school after negative COVID-19 test (PCR or rapid antigen) AND all symptoms have resolved without the use of medications OR if a physician, nurse practitioner, or other licensed medical professional practicing under the license of a physician determines that symptoms are not new, or worsening based on a chronic medical condition OR if a licensed health care provider has made an alternative diagnosis based on a diagnostic test such as a positive strep screen or a positive screen for influenza.</p>	<p>Recommend evaluation and testing with physician, nurse practitioner, or other licensed medical professional practicing under the license of a physician for index case.</p> <p>Notify teacher of symptomatic student and to monitor class to determine if others become ill.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If 10% or more of students in shared air space have confirmed or suspected cases in a classroom, assess likelihood of in-class transmission and consider next steps. The FCDPH expects all schools to report when they are aware that 10% or more of students in a shared air space meet the requirement to isolate while positive for COVID-19.
<p>10. Outbreak of cases on campus.</p>	<p>If a school suspects transmission is occurring in a classroom or an activity, consider classroom or activity closure as a “last resort” based on risk of ongoing transmission.</p> <p>For outbreaks involving staff, refer to CalOSHA ETS.</p> <p>FCDPH recommends consulting with FCDPH prior to classroom or activity closures.</p>	<p>Schools should report through the SPOT portal when they are aware that 10% or more of students and staff in a shared air space meet the requirement to isolate while positive for COVID-19 and when it is suspected that the cases are epidemiologically linked.</p> <p>Follow guidance in #1 and consider next steps in consultation with the FCDPH.</p> <p>Notify the FCDPH through the SPOT portal when a classroom is closed because of COVID-19.</p>
<p>11. What if a student or staff member has a chronic condition</p>	<p>Students and staff members with a chronic condition that in the opinion of a physician, nurse practitioner, or other licensed medical professional practicing under the license of a physician is causing one of the COVID-19 symptoms can</p>	

causing one of the COVID-19 symptoms?	<p>return to school if they have a note from a physician, nurse practitioner, or other licensed medical professional practicing under the license of a physician indicating that their symptoms are related to a chronic condition and are not new or worsening.</p> <p>The physician, nurse practitioner, or other licensed medical professional practicing under the license of a physician should document in their medical record the chronic condition that is the basis for the symptom(s) in question. If a student or staff member has recurrence of similar symptoms related to the same chronic condition on a later date, schools should consider both symptoms and prior notes written by a physician, nurse practitioner, or other licensed medical professional practicing under the license of a physician when determining next steps. Students or teachers who have fever, cough, or shortness of breath upon entry to school or during school should be advised to stay at home or return to home until their symptoms have resolved even if they have been diagnosed with a chronic condition that in the opinion of a physician, nurse practitioner, or other licensed medical professional practicing under the license of a physician is causing one of the COVID-19 symptoms.</p>	
12. What if a student or staff member has one of the COVID-19 symptoms but has been diagnosed with another infectious disease or medical condition?	Students or staff members may return to school if their symptoms have resolved and if a physician, nurse practitioner, or other licensed medical professional practicing under the license of a physician has determined that the cause for their symptoms is due to another infectious process or medical condition that is confirmed by diagnostic testing, such as a positive strep test for sore throat, or a positive influenza test for flu symptoms. Students or teachers who have fever, cough, or shortness of breath when they are screened upon entry to school or during school should be advised to stay at home or return to home until their symptoms have resolved even if they have been diagnosed with a condition other than COVID-19.	
13. Can school nurses that are identified as close contacts quarantine under the health care worker guidance?	Follow guidance for health care professionals as described in Cal/OSHA ETS.	
14. Are there any requirements for schools that are planning for indoor dances or large assemblies?	Dances in particular are considered higher risk activities because they can involve direct physical contact similar to high-risk sports. However, there are no specific restrictions on indoor dances or large assemblies.	

Definitions:

COVID-19 Symptoms: People with COVID-19 have had a wide range of symptoms reported – ranging from mild symptoms to severe illness. Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. Anyone can have mild to severe symptoms. People with these symptoms may have COVID-19:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

Symptoms of COVID-19 | CDC

A person who had a documented case of COVID-19 and whose isolation period ended (including being asymptomatic for at least one day) and who then develops new symptoms consistent with COVID-19 during the 90 days after the date of initial symptom onset, likely warrants additional testing unless an alternative etiology can be or has been readily identified by a healthcare provider.

Testing: Both PCR and rapid antigen tests are available and can be used in school settings to determine if COVID-19 is present or absent. If both a rapid antigen and a PCR test are done on the same day and have different results, the PCR result should determine if the individual who is tested has COVID-19. If the rapid antigen and PCR tests are done on different days, the result from the first COVID-19 test should be used to determine COVID-19 status. Home tests may be considered when determining COVID-19 status if there is a mechanism for school personnel to verify the test result, such as through direct observation. Positive COVID-19 home test results entered by schools into State of California data bases such as CalConnect will be accepted as true positives. For more information regarding COVID-19 testing, please refer to the CDPH COVID-19 testing guidance: <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/Updated-COVID-19-Testing-Guidance.aspx>

Index case: Person with a positive COVID-19 test. In these scenarios, index case also refers to the person (student, teacher, or staff) who reports symptoms.

Close contact*: Close contact is defined as someone who has been in a shared air space with an infected person for a total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period, cumulative time, during the infectious period. For the purposes of determining a close contact, cumulative time is defined as the period of time of exposure to ANY/ALL COVID-19 positive person(s), and is calculated as 15 minutes or more of time where a close contact has been in contact to a person(s) positive with COVID-19 while that person(s) was infectious, i.e. 2 days prior to symptom onset while symptomatic, or 2 days prior to test date if asymptomatic, up to the last contact with the COVID-19 positive person(s). The close contact definition applies in both the indoor and outdoor settings. If questions about whether an individual meets the criteria for a close contact, refer to key contributing factors. Refer additional questions regarding close contact criteria to the FCDPH.

Outbreak: For purposes of determining a COVID-19 outbreak in Fresno County, an outbreak exists when 10% or more of students, teachers, staff, or volunteers (employees per CalOSHA) in a shared air space are isolating because of a confirmed COVID-19 positive infection.

Quarantine: Separates individuals who are close contacts of a confirmed COVID-19 positive case but who are not yet ill from others.

Isolation: Separates infected people who have a confirmed COVID-19 test from others.

Covid-19 School Scenario Guidance

Potential Scenarios	Key Contributing Factors	Potential Responses/Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Student has tested positive for COVID-19 <input type="checkbox"/> Student feels ill and is waiting for test results <input type="checkbox"/> Student develops COVID symptoms while at school <input type="checkbox"/> Member of student's household tests positive <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher tests positive <input type="checkbox"/> Student feels ill with COVID symptoms but parent will not be testing child <input type="checkbox"/> Student tests negative but has COVID symptoms (possible false negative) <input type="checkbox"/> Administrator or staff member, or volunteer tests positive <input type="checkbox"/> Administrator or staff, or volunteer feels ill with COVID symptoms <input type="checkbox"/> AM Kindergarten student or teacher tests positive <input type="checkbox"/> Outbreak of cases on campus <input type="checkbox"/> Bus driver, or student rider on bus, tests positive <input type="checkbox"/> Student or teacher in after school program tests positive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Was index case wearing mask properly? <input type="checkbox"/> Was social distancing maintained? <input type="checkbox"/> Duration of exposure to index case. <input type="checkbox"/> COVID-19 confirmed or suspected <input type="checkbox"/> Index case symptomatic or asymptomatic <input type="checkbox"/> Location of exposure - classroom, outdoors, other indoor setting <input type="checkbox"/> Proper PPE used? <input type="checkbox"/> Prior positive cases in classroom? <input type="checkbox"/> Prior positive cases on school campus? <input type="checkbox"/> Type of transportation to and from school <input type="checkbox"/> Windows open or closed on bus <input type="checkbox"/> Presumed source of spread to index case-school vs community <input type="checkbox"/> Household contacts at other schools <input type="checkbox"/> Close contacts in school sports or other after-school programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Notify school community of COVID positive cases in the child's classroom or school <input type="checkbox"/> Complete contact tracing <input type="checkbox"/> Quarantine close contacts <input type="checkbox"/> Inform potential close contacts to self-monitor, follow up with physician if symptoms develop. <input type="checkbox"/> Sanitize and disinfect potentially contaminated equipment, supplies, and rooms <input type="checkbox"/> Close classroom <input type="checkbox"/> Contact the Fresno County Department of Public Health (FC DPH) <input type="checkbox"/> Recommend testing if not already done <input type="checkbox"/> Recommend evaluation from physician <input type="checkbox"/> Follow up contact with index case and/or close contacts scheduled