



Close Contacts / Exposure / Isolation / Quarantine / Exclusion from School*

The majority of these responses are excerpts from SCDHEC's [Guide to COVID-19 in Schools: Answers to Frequently Asked Questions](#). For a full copy of these guidelines, please visit SCDHEC's website or Riverview's website.

What is the difference between quarantine and isolation?

Isolation and quarantine are measures taken to physically separate people to reduce the risk of spreading the virus. Isolation separates those believed to be contagious with COVID-19. Quarantine separates those at risk of becoming contagious because they are believed to have been exposed. More information is available on DHEC's [COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions](#) webpage.

What is the isolation guidance for someone who is symptomatic and waiting for test results?

An asymptomatic individual who is awaiting test results should remain in isolation until the test results are known.

If a staff member tests positive for COVID-19 but is asymptomatic, can he/she still work?

No, they cannot work. They should isolate as instructed.

What is the guidance for a student or staff member living in a house with someone who has been in isolation? Are household members advised to quarantine?

Students or staff members who live in a house with someone positive for COVID-19 and are able to isolate from the individual will need to quarantine for 14 days since last exposure. If they are unable to isolate from the individual in the household, the student or staff member will need to quarantine for the entire isolation period of the family member plus an additional 14 days to assure they do not develop symptoms. See the [CDC Quarantine calendar](#) for a visual representation.

Can a student participate in distance learning while isolating or in quarantine?

Students may participate in distance learning, as long as they are physically able.

What does it mean to be a close contact of someone with COVID-19?

Close contact is defined as being within 6 feet of someone who tested positive for COVID-19 for at least several minutes (usually about 15 minutes). The virus is spread primarily from person to person through respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks. It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth or nose. That is why it is so important to wash your hands often and clean frequently touched surfaces at least daily.

Is testing recommended for close contacts?

Yes, testing is recommended for close contacts, but no sooner than seven (7) days after first contact with the person when they were contagious with COVID-19.

If a close contact to a case tests negative for COVID during their quarantine, does their quarantine end, thus allowing them to return to school?

No. A close contact to a case must complete their quarantine period regardless of test results. Those who test positive would now need to complete isolation criteria based on the current guidelines. Click Here for [SCDHEC's Close Contact Guidelines](#)

If a teacher has intermittent close contact with a student positive for COVID-19 throughout the day, would we consider him/her a close contact if the close contacts add up to fifteen minutes or more?

“Close contact” is determined through the case investigation process and is dependent upon each situation. In general, if a teacher is spending periods of time in close contact with a student greater than 15 minutes throughout the day, the teacher would be considered a close contact.

If a teacher/staff is a close contact to a case but is asymptomatic, can he/she continue to work?

Maybe. Teachers and school staff are considered critical infrastructure employees so they may continue to work if it is necessary to maintain school operations and staff limitations exist. The staff member must immediately notify the School Nurse and Principal of the close contact so consideration can be given to their unique circumstance and a decision can be made about their immediate work status. DHEC's interim school guidance provides more information on continuing to work while in quarantine.

If an employee has been in a group setting and is now showing COVID-19 symptoms with test results pending, how do you handle others in the group? Are the others OK to continue working?

Maybe. Teachers and school staff are considered critical infrastructure employees so they may continue to work if it is necessary to maintain school operations and staff limitations exist. The staff member must immediately notify the School Nurse and Principal of the close contact so consideration can be given to their unique circumstance and a decision can be made about their immediate work status. DHEC's interim school guidance provides more information on continuing to work while in quarantine.

What happens if a student or staff member has had close contact to a COVID-19 positive person outside of school?

Begin by notifying your physician. Additionally, parents/guardians of students should notify the School Nurse so she can advise you on return to school guidelines. Staff members must immediately notify the School Nurse and Principal so consideration can be given to their unique circumstance and a decision can be made about their immediate work status.

Can close contacts be “cohorted” in the same classroom instead of excluding them?

This is not recommended at this time.

What will the case investigation process look like?

When notified of a positive case, DHEC case investigators and epidemiology staff will interview the case (or if a child, then their parent/guardian) to determine the infectious period, potential close contacts, and to reiterate education about isolation. If there is an association with the school, DHEC will reach out to the school to confirm close contacts and determine the appropriate course of action. Both the case and close contacts will be contacted routinely via phone by the DHEC contact monitoring team to assure there are not continued questions or concerns.

If a student or staff member are tested, how long will it take to receive results?

Resulting is dependent upon which testing site the individual attends. Testing sites are sponsored by a variety of partners and resulting time is dependent upon the lab company being used by the site. The client should receive their results directly from the medical partner conducting the testing event.

How will the schools be notified if there is a positive case in the school?

Notification may happen in a couple of different ways. The student's parent/guardian or the staff member may notify the school before DHEC is aware of the case. If this occurs, the school will need to report the case to the regional DHEC epidemiology office during normal business hours. If DHEC is aware of the case prior to the school, a DHEC epidemiologist will call the principal of the school or his/her designee. Maintaining two-way communication between the school and the epidemiology staff will be vital to the case investigation process. The school should maintain the case's confidentiality.

What is the expectation of the School Nurse during a case investigation? Will the school be responsible for contact tracing?

The School Nurse must report any known positive test results that have not already been discussed with DHEC to DHEC's regional epidemiology office. During the case investigation, the nurse, principal or teacher may be asked to help assess and confirm close contacts. Once close contacts are confirmed DHEC staff will work with the principal and nurse to determine appropriate next steps and potentially send out letters to parents from the school. The school nurse will not be responsible for doing a case investigation or ongoing contact tracing but will inform the process.

Will DHEC send letters to the parents or will the schools? Is there a template letter that can be used?

Schools are responsible for the notification process. There is a template letter that can be customized and sent to the parents of contacts in the schools. These letters can be sent by the schools after coordination and communication with DHEC is confirmed.

If an individual has symptoms but their physician will not perform the test, do we exclude them from school without a positive test?

The individual can return if their physician thinks there is another likely diagnosis (i.e. test positive for strep), or if they receive a negative test result, or if they complete the isolation period. A physician's note must be provided in cases of other diagnosis', and individuals

interested in free, community testing can visit the DHEC [testing page](#) or [mobile testing](#) webpage. These sites are updated daily.

Can school nurses conduct testing?

Not at this time.

What is the guidance for students suspected of having COVID-19 but refuse testing? Do we send the child home?

Yes, the child should be isolated until it has been at least 10 days since their symptoms began, they have been free of their fever for 24 hours without the aid of fever reducing medication, and other symptoms are improved.

At what temperature reading do schools send a student home?

If a student or staff member has a temperature of 100.4°F and above, they should be sent home, regardless of whether or not they have any other symptoms. Children or staff with temperatures between 100.1°F and 100.3°F should be excluded under the influenza-like illness (ILI) criteria if they also have cough and/or sore throat with no other known cause. Refer to the [School Exclusion List](#) for more information.

What COVID-19 symptoms should schools watch for, and when should schools send students home?

Students and Staff should be excluded from school if they have:

- *Any one (1) of the following:*
 - *Fever - or -*
 - *Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing - or -*
 - *New or worsening cough*
- *Any two (2) of the following:*
 - *Sore throat*
 - *Muscle or body aches*
 - *Chills*
 - *Fatigue*
 - *Headache*
 - *Congestion or runny nose*
 - *Diarrhea*
 - *Nausea or vomiting*

Students or Staff exhibiting these symptoms while on campus should:

- *Be sent to a supervised isolation area, away from the rest of the students and staff, to await pick-up by a family member.*
- *Remain under visual supervision of a staff member who is at least 6 feet away. The supervising adult will wear a surgical mask.*
- *Require the symptomatic person to wear a surgical mask while waiting to leave campus.*