



Daily Health Screening and Handling a Case of COVID-19 in Nonpublic Prekindergarten (Pre-K) to Grade 12 Schools: What School Administrators Need to Know

Nonpublic pre-K to grade 12 schools can play an important role in helping New York City (NYC) slow the spread of COVID-19 by quickly addressing cases of COVID-19 in their schools. This guide includes frequently asked questions and a model health screening tool.

Please refer to New York State (NYS) COVID-19 pre-K to grade 12 school [requirements](#) and the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's [Reopening FAQ](#) and [Checklist](#) for additional information regarding physical distancing, face coverings, hygiene, cleaning and disinfection, and other topics.

How will I know that a staff member or student in my school has COVID-19 or has been identified as a close contact of someone who has COVID-19?

Program staff and students must be screened daily prior to entering school.

- Review the NYC Health Department model health screening tool at the end of this guide and tailor it to your setting.
- Train staff, parents and guardians to use the health screening tool in the morning before leaving home and about how to notify you if they answer “yes” to any of the questions.
- Ensure staff and families that information will be kept confidential.
- Call parents or guardians if a student is absent to learn whether the child has COVID-19.
- Provide parents and guardians with information about your protocols so they know what to expect.

You may also learn of a confirmed COVID-19 case from the NYC Health Department.

How should I conduct daily health screenings?

Use the sample screening tool at the end of this guide in the way that makes sense for your school. Ideas for screening include:

- Call staff and families before they leave home to ask the screening questions.
- Set up an automated phone line that allows staff and families to indicate “yes” or “no,” and have someone monitor the line to ensure compliance.
- Issue an auto-generated email or survey that enables a response.
- Best practice is to perform screening remotely. However, if screening from home is not feasible, designate a screening area and distribute the screening questions on paper to staff, students, parents, guardians and any others who enter the school.

What safety protocols are required if screening is conducted on-site at the school?

- People awaiting screening must maintain at least 6 feet of distance from others.
- Screeners and screened individuals (except for children 2 years old and younger) must wear a face covering if they can medically tolerate one. If the person being screened cannot medically tolerate a face covering, the school should consider a reasonable accommodation, such as having the individual complete a written screening survey rather than an in-person screening.
- Screen in a location that is not a confined space (for example, do not use a small office with a closed door). If possible, perform screenings outdoors.
- Design a way to screen that prevents others from hearing what is being said and to minimize others from observing screenings.
- Incorporate physical distancing (maintaining at least 6 feet between screeners and others) or physical barriers to minimize the screener's and screened individual's exposure during the screening.

Should we take temperatures as part of the daily health screening? What safety protocols are required?

Schools are not required to perform temperatures checks on-site. If you decide to do so for students, staff and others seeking entry (for example, visitors, vendors, contractors), consider the following:

- Use a noncontact thermometer (such as an infrared forehead thermometer or infrared scanner). Do not use oral (inserted into the mouth) or tympanic (inserted into the ear) thermometers.
- The person using the noncontact thermometer should strictly follow the manufacturer's instructions for use. Additional guidance regarding use of non-contact infrared thermometers can be found [here](#) or at [fda.gov](https://www.fda.gov) (search for "noncontact thermometer").
- When noncontact thermometers are used and the screener does not have physical contact with the screened individual, gloves do not need to be changed before the next check.
- Screening areas should have a supply of alcohol wipes to sanitize equipment that inadvertently touches someone. Clean after each person is screened if there is contact.

What happens if a staff member or student has COVID-19 or symptoms of COVID-19?

- If a person in your school has COVID-19 or symptoms of COVID-19, they cannot attend school until **all** the following are true:
 - It has been at least 10 days since their symptoms started
 - They have not had a fever within the last 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication
 - Their overall illness has improved
- If the person never had symptoms but had a positive lab test for COVID-19, they must stay home for 10 days from the date the specimen was obtained for their positive COVID-19 test.

- If the person had symptoms and receives a negative test result, they can return to school after they have not had fever for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications. The negative test result must be from a lab-confirmed diagnostic test. If you're not sure if your test is lab-confirmed, ask the health care provider performing your test.
- If COVID-19 has been confirmed by a diagnostic test (nose or throat swab, or saliva), all close contacts of the person must quarantine and cannot attend school for 14 days after their last contact with the person while they were infectious. A close contact is a person who has been within 6 feet of a person with COVID-19 for at least 10 minutes. In preschool classrooms, this will likely mean that, at a minimum, all children and the teacher in the classroom are close contacts. The NYC Health Department will help schools identify close contacts.

How will I know if a staff or student has received a positive COVID-19 diagnostic test result?

The NYC Health Department will let you know when a person identified as being a staff or student at your school has a positive diagnostic test for COVID-19. You may hear from the NYC Health Department even before your staff member or the student's parents or guardians notify you. If you hear first from staff or families that a student or staff has a positive diagnostic test for COVID-19, contact the 24-hour NYC Health Department COVID-19 Hotline at 866-692-3641 to report the case. The NYC Health Department will follow up to let you know whether the person is a confirmed case and, if they are, regarding next steps, as described below.

Can a person attend school while waiting for their COVID-19 diagnostic test result?

A person who had symptoms of COVID-19 within the last 10 days must stay home while they wait for their test results. If the individual has been told to quarantine because they have been identified as a close contact or because of recent travel, they must stay home for the full 14 days.

If I learn that a staff member or student has a positive COVID-19 diagnostic test result, what should I do?

Take these steps immediately:

- If you have not heard from the NYC Health Department, please call the 24-hour COVID-19 Hotline at 866-692-3641 to report a confirmed case in your school. Please only call when the students or staff members have a positive result from a diagnostic test (not an antibody test) for COVID-19.
- The NYC Health Department will determine the person's likely "infectious period," which is the time period when they can spread the virus, to determine whether they attended your school during the infectious period.
 - If the NYC Health Department determines the person was **not** in your school during their infectious period, unless they direct you otherwise, there is nothing else to do.
 - If the NYC Health Department determines the person **was** in your school during their infectious period, they will work with you to identify everyone who could

have been a close contact (within 6 feet for at least 10 minutes) of the person in your school during their infectious period.

- The NYC Health Department will provide a template letter for you to notify all identified close contacts (staff members, and parents and guardians of students) to tell them they or their children were exposed to COVID-19 and need to stay home (quarantine) for 14 days from the date they were last exposed (if they develop symptoms during this time, they will need to isolate). The letter will inform them there was an exposure but will not reveal the name of the person with COVID-19 or other identifying information.
 - Close contacts may not enter any school during the quarantine period and should otherwise stay home except for essential medical care (including testing).
 - If students or staff identified as close contacts are already on-site, follow your existing isolation protocol, contact children's parents and guardians for immediate pick-up, and send staff who are close contacts home.

Note: If your school has an early childhood education contract with the NYC Department of Education (DOE), you must immediately notify the NYC DOE's Division of Early Childhood Education of any positive COVID-19 test results at your school.

Should I provide a letter to staff, and parents and guardians of children who were *not* close contacts?

You are strongly encouraged to inform people who were not close contacts there was a person with COVID-19 at your school, without compromising the confidentiality of the confirmed case. The NYC Health Department will share a template letter for those who were not exposed.

Can I share information about the person with COVID-19 with parents, guardians or others?

No. You should not reveal the identity of the person with COVID-19 (other than to the NYC Health Department staff assisting in the investigation) or share information about the person with COVID-19, including what grade or classroom the person attended or any information about the symptoms the person may have had. That information is confidential. Maintaining confidentiality will help encourage other people to disclose when they have COVID-19.

What should I do if a staff member or student has symptoms of COVID-19 but is not a confirmed case? Should I notify families?

- Only confirmed cases require assessment of close contacts and exclusions. You are not required to notify families when someone in the school has symptoms of COVID-19 but is not confirmed. If you want to notify families, let them know that:
 - A person has symptoms, is not a confirmed case of COVID-19 and is not attending school for at least 10 days (unless they receive a negative lab-based test result, as described above).
 - Their child may continue to attend school.
 - If they are concerned, they should talk to their health care provider.
 - The symptoms of COVID-19 are very nonspecific and, often, are similar to other

respiratory viral infections, including flu.

What should I do if learn during nonbusiness hours that a staff member or student has COVID-19?

If a staff member, parent or guardian notifies you they or their child has COVID-19 or symptoms of COVID-19 during nonbusiness hours:

- Remind the staff member, parent or guardian they or their child cannot enter the school for at least 10 days and should isolate at home.
- Call the NYC Health Department at 866-692-3641. This number is monitored 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The NYC Health Department will investigate whether the person is a confirmed case of COVID-19 and contact you to let you know. If the case is confirmed, the NYC Health Department will work with you to identify close contacts who must be excluded.

What if there are multiple cases of COVID-19 in my school at the same time?

If there are two or more confirmed cases of COVID-19 in different classrooms, you are strongly encouraged to follow the [protocol of the NYC DOE](#). The NYC Health Department will also investigate and provide guidance.

Where can I find information about COVID-19 testing to provide to my staff and families?

Provide your staff and families with information about [COVID-19 testing](#) and remind them to let you know as soon as they receive any positive diagnostic test results. Testing is free at many locations for all New Yorkers, regardless of immigration status.

Do I need to do any special cleaning or disinfection in the areas the person with COVID-19 used while in their infectious period?

Close off areas used by the person confirmed to have COVID-19 and follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines on [Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility](#).

What if someone in my school has had an antibody test?

A positive or negative antibody test result should not be used to make any decisions about whether someone can work or attend school. Antibody tests for COVID-19 cannot be used to detect whether someone is currently sick or infected. It is also not yet known whether a positive antibody test means that someone is protected from getting COVID-19 again.

Sample Health Screening for Nonpublic Schools

For daily screening of all people (staff, children, parents, guardians and others) who seek to enter school. Screening should be performed prior to leaving home if possible.

1. Have you experienced a temperature of 100.0 degrees F or greater, a new cough, new loss of taste or smell, or shortness of breath within the past 10 days?
 - No.
Go to the next question.
 - Yes.
No further screening is needed. You may not enter the school. Parents/guardians must notify the school.

2. In the past 10 days, have you tested positive for COVID-19 using a test that tested saliva or used a nose or throat swab (not a blood test)? (10 days measured from the date you were tested, not the date you received the test result.)
 - No.
Go to the next question.
 - Yes.
No further screening is needed. You may not enter school. Parents or guardians must notify the school.

3. To the best of your knowledge, in the past 14 days, have you been in close contact (within 6 feet for at least 10 minutes) with anyone while they had COVID-19?
 - No.
Go to the next question.
 - Yes.
No further screening is needed. You may not enter the school. Parents or guardians must notify the school.

4. In the past 14 days, have you traveled internationally or returned from a state that was identified by New York State as having widespread community transmission of COVID-19 (other than just passing through the restricted state for less than 24 hours)? (Visit <https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/covid-19-travel-advisory> for applicable states.)
 - No.
You may enter to the school.
 - Yes.
No further screening is needed. You may not enter the school.