



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

Nonpublic and charter pre-K to grade 12 schools can play an important role in helping NYC slow the spread of COVID-19 by quickly addressing cases of COVID-19 in their schools. This guide provides answers to questions about screening and how to handle confirmed or possible cases of COVID-19 in your school.

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 (NYC Health Department) [School Reopening Checklist](#) for additional information on physical distancing, face coverings, hand hygiene, cleaning and disinfection, and other topics.

All nonpublic and charter schools not colocated in an NYC Department of Education school must also follow this [NYC Commissioner of Health Order](#).¹ Please see [here](#) for more information about those requirements.

Some schools may have additional requirements due to the NYS Cluster Action Initiative. To find out if your school is in a zone with restrictions, visit nyc.gov/covidzone. Zone designations may change, so please regularly check this website. Please see the NYC Health Department's guidance on Cluster Action Initiative Testing Requirements for schools in NYS-designated zones.

Teachers and other school staff are eligible for COVID-19 vaccination. For a full list of eligible groups, visit nyc.gov/covidvaccinedistribution. COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective. Getting vaccinated is the most important way to protect yourself from severe COVID-19 illness, hospitalization, and death. For information on COVID-19 vaccines, visit nyc.gov/covidvaccine. To find a vaccination site and make an appointment, visit vaccinefinder.nyc.gov. If you need assistance making an appointment at a City-run vaccination site, call 877-VAX-4NYC (877-829-4692).

All administrators, staff, students and visitors should be reminded to continue to follow the key COVID-19 prevention measures:

- **Stay home if sick:** Monitor your health and stay home if you are sick, have COVID-19, were recently exposed to someone with COVID-19, or recently traveled except for getting essential medical care (including [COVID-19 testing](#)) or other essential errands.
- **Physical distancing:** Stay at least 6 feet from people who are not members of your household.
- **Wear a face covering:** Protect yourself and those around you. Wearing a face covering

¹ This Order [was modified](#) to align with NYS's changes to required quarantine length.

helps reduce the spread of COVID-19, especially if you are sick and don't have symptoms. For more information about face coverings, see [FAQ About Face Coverings](#).

- **Practice healthy hand hygiene:** Wash your hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available; clean frequently touched surfaces regularly; avoid touching your face with unwashed hands; and cover your cough or sneeze with your arm, not your hands.

Health Screening

What daily health screenings are required?

School staff and students must be screened daily prior to entering school. In addition, they should be reminded to go home (following appropriate protocols) if they start to feel unwell during the day.

- 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 do not pass the screening.
- Assure 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 symptoms and if anyone in the household has COVID-19.
- Provide parents and guardians with information about your protocols so they know what to expect.

How should daily health screenings be conducted?

Screening should be done remotely if possible. Here are some ideas for how to conduct health screenings:

- 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 monitor the line to ensure compliance.
- Issue an auto-generated email or survey that enables a response.
- 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?

- Maintain physical distance.
 - People awaiting screening must maintain at least 6 feet of distance from others.
 - Incorporate physical distancing (maintaining at least 6 feet between screeners and others) or physical barriers to minimize the screener's and screened person's exposure to each other during the screening.
 - Staff should maintain 6 feet of distance from each other.
- Screeners and screened people (except for children under 2 years old) must wear a face covering if they can medically tolerate one. If the person being screened cannot medically tolerate a face covering, consider a reasonable accommodation, such as having the person 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.

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

Daily temperature checks are required by NYS as part of the daily health screening at schools. Families and staff are strongly encouraged to complete the screening and temperature check at home before coming to school. If families and staff are unable to do so, schools must be prepared to perform temperatures checks on-site. As you develop a plan, 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 noncontact infrared thermometers can be found [here](#) or at fda.gov (search for “noncontact thermometer”).
- When noncontact thermometers are used and the screener does not have physical contact with the screened person, 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.

Can a person tested for COVID-19 as part of a screening program attend school while awaiting test results?

Yes, people tested for screening purposes who do not have symptoms of COVID-19 may attend school while waiting for their test results.

Handling a Case in Your School Community

What steps should I take when I learn that a student or staff member has COVID-19?

If a person in your school community has COVID-19 (positive diagnostic test), do the following:

- Determine whether the person attended or worked in the school during their [infectious period](#) (defined below) potentially exposing others to COVID-19.
- If they attended school during their infectious period, identify all people who were [close contacts](#) (defined below) of the person with COVID-19 during the person’s infectious period.
- Exclude all close contacts from school and inform them that, per the NYS Department of Health (NYSDOH), they will need to stay home and [separate from others](#) in their household for 10 days from the date of their last exposure. They should continue to monitor themselves for fever or other COVID-19 symptoms for four days after quarantine has ended. If symptoms occur, they should isolate themselves, contact their

health care provider and get evaluated for COVID-19.

- Report the new COVID-19 case to the NYC Health Department by calling 866-692-3641. If the NYC Health Department determines that additional follow-up is needed, you will be contacted with instructions.

What is the infectious period of a person with COVID-19?

The infectious period is when someone with COVID-19 may potentially spread it to others (when they are contagious).

- The **start date** of the infectious period is two days before the person had their first symptom or two days before their COVID-19 test date if they never have symptoms.
- The **end date** of the infectious period is 10 days after the person had their first symptom or 10 days after their COVID-19 test date if they never have symptoms.

The test date is the date when the test took place, not the date when the test results were reported to the provider or patient.

What is a close contact?

A close contact is someone who has been within 6 feet for at least 10 minutes over a 24-hour period of someone who has COVID-19 during their infectious period, regardless of face covering use or the presence of plexiglass or other barriers.

Additionally, other people may be considered close contacts in certain situations, including:

- When physical distancing cannot be consistently monitored or maintained (such as on the school bus, younger children who are unable to remain 6 feet apart, and during sports and recreational activities).
- When people are participating in activities that require projecting the voice, such as singing or playing wind or brass instruments (see [NYS Schools Master Guidance](#)) in an enclosed space.

Facilities may choose to be more restrictive and exclude an entire classroom or pod from school for 10 days, keeping in mind the burden this imposes on people and their families.

If you have questions regarding who is a close contact, call the NYC Health Department at 866-692-3641. Consultation is available from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily.

When can a staff member or student return to school if they have COVID-19?

Any person confirmed with COVID-19 must stay home (isolate) until all the following are true:

- At least 10 days have passed since the person's symptoms started
- They have not had a fever for the last 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication
- Their overall illness has improved.

If the person never had symptoms, they should stay home for 10 days from the date they were tested.

When can a staff member or student return to school if they had symptoms of COVID-19?

Anyone with symptoms of COVID-19, including a fever of 100.0 degrees Fahrenheit or greater, cough, loss of taste or smell, or shortness of breath that began within the past 10 days, cannot attend school **even if their provider says that they have something other than COVID-19** (such as allergies, strep throat or flu) **until**:

- It has been at least 10 days since their symptoms started **and** they have not had a fever for the last 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication **and** their overall illness has improved; **or**
- They are not yet confirmed to have COVID-19, test negative by a molecular diagnostic test, **and** have not had a fever in the past 24 hours without use of fever-reducing medication
 - The negative diagnostic test must be a molecular test (often called PCR tests). An antigen diagnostic test or antibody test is not acceptable for this purpose. People should ask their provider before they get tested to make sure they are getting the right type of test. When someone seeks to return to school after having had symptoms but before the end of their isolation period, you should verify their negative test result was from a molecular diagnostic test. For more information about COVID-19 testing, see [COVID-19 Testing: Frequently Asked Questions](#).
 - If a person has been told to quarantine because they were identified as a close contact, they must stay home for the full 10-day quarantine period even if they test negative by a molecular diagnostic.

For people with symptom onset less than three days after receiving a COVID-19 vaccine:

- If symptoms include cough, shortness of breath, runny nose, sore throat, loss of taste or smell, fever, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea, manage as potential COVID-19 infection (exclude them from school).
- If the **only** symptoms are fatigue, headache, chills, or muscle or joint pain, people may return to school if symptoms resolve within two days. If symptoms persist beyond this timeframe, manage as potential COVID-19 infection (exclude them from school).

Routine, non-COVID-19 guidance still applies for determining when a child or staff member who is sick does not have COVID-19 or symptoms of COVID-19 may return to school.

Do I need to do any special cleaning or disinfection in areas used by people with COVID-19?

Close off areas used by people confirmed with COVID-19 who were in the school during their infectious period. Follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines on [Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility](#).

Does a staff member or student who had COVID-19, symptoms of COVID-19 or was required to quarantine need a doctor's note or COVID-19 testing to return to school?

No. If they have completed isolation or quarantine, they do not need any documentation to return to school. They do not need a doctor's note, a note from the NYC Health Department or a negative laboratory test result.

A person in my school must quarantine because they were identified as a close contact of someone with COVID-19. Can they return to school before the end of their quarantine period if they test negative for COVID-19?

No. The person must stay home for 10 days. After the 10-day quarantine period ends and particularly for the first four days, people should continue to monitor for symptoms and strictly follow COVID-19 prevention practices, such as wearing a face covering, and practicing physical distancing and good hand hygiene because a person remains at risk for developing COVID-19 for up to 14 days after being exposed to the virus.

If a person has symptoms of COVID-19 but has not had a test yet (or test results are unknown), do close contacts of that person need to quarantine?

If the person with symptoms has a known exposure to someone with COVID-19, their close contacts should be excluded and told to quarantine. If there was no known exposure, contact the NYC Health Department at 866-692-3641 for consultation, as a case-by-case assessment is required. Consultation is available from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily.

Do the contacts of someone in quarantine also need to quarantine?

Generally, no. Contacts of someone in quarantine do not need to stay home unless the quarantined person develops symptoms of COVID-19 or tests positive for COVID-19.

If someone has been vaccinated against COVID-19, do they still need to quarantine if they are identified as a contact at the school?

Yes. Per NYS, they will still need to quarantine.

Can someone who travels test out of quarantine?

For travel-related quarantine, the length of quarantine may be reduced in certain circumstances. Teachers, school employees and child care workers must quarantine for a minimum of 3 days after returning to New York from a designated state or country. They may return to work if they are tested on day 4 after arriving and the test result is negative. See [NYS travel quarantine requirements](#) and the NYC Health Department's [Traveling During COVID-19](#) guidance for more information.

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

Report all cases to the NYC Health Department. If there are multiple confirmed cases of COVID-19 in different classrooms, you should follow the above guidance about excluding any students or staff who are close contacts. You are not required to close the school immediately (but you may choose to do so) unless the NYC Health Department concludes that it is necessary to do so. If the NYC Health Department determines that additional follow-up is needed with your school, you will be contacted with further instructions.

Are there criteria for closing schools due to cases of COVID-19 at the school?

The decision to close a school is based on various factors including the number of cases over time and their distribution across grades and classrooms, the size of the school, the ability of the school to exclude people who need to be isolated and quarantined in a timely manner, adherence to NYC Health Department guidance, and cooperation with NYC Health Department.

What happens if a student or staff person with confirmed COVID-19 rode or drove a school bus during their infectious period?

If an person with confirmed COVID-19 rode in or drove a school bus during their infectious period, all children and staff who were on the bus with that person will need to quarantine for 10 days. Everyone must quarantine even if they were following physical distancing, wearing face coverings and taking other precautions.

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, or whether someone is immune to the virus.

Notifying Families**Do you have a template letter I can use for notifying families that someone with COVID-19 was part of our school community?**

Yes. The NYC Health Department has a template letter for you to notify all identified close contacts (staff members, and parents and guardians of students) of their exposure and the need to stay home (quarantine) for 10 days from exposure, and with information about what to do if they develop symptoms. You are also encouraged to inform people who were not close contacts that there was a person with COVID-19 at your school. Templates for both close contacts and the broader school community are available [here](#).

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.

Resources

Where can people get tested for COVID-19?

Use this link to provide your staff and families with information about [COVID-19 testing](#) and remind them to let you know right away if they receive any positive diagnostic test results. To find a testing site, visit nyc.gov/covidtest. Many sites have no-cost testing, regardless of immigration or insurance status. Remind staff and parents to let you know right away if they or their children receive a positive diagnostic test result.

Where can staff and families find more information about COVID-19 testing, quarantine and isolation?

The following NYS Health Department resources may be helpful:

- [COVID-19: Understanding Quarantine and Isolation](#)
- [COVID-19 Testing: Frequently Asked Questions](#)

The NYC Health Department may change recommendations as the situation evolves.

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