



School and Early Childhood Education (ECE) Additional Specific Guidance

Overall recommendations outlined for the COVID-19 Community Levels are the same for schools and ECE programs as they are for the community. The low (green), medium (yellow), and high (orange) COVID-19 Community Levels are the basis of guidance moving forward, those details can be found on the CDC website.

Masking, Prevention Strategies and Outbreaks

- COVID positive students in school days 6-10 are required to **wear masks at all times** aside from eating
- Students and staff that have had an exposure are required to remain masked as much as possible
- Schools and ECE programs may need to require masking in classrooms or during activities to protect immunocompromised children or staff
- Schools and ECE programs need to work with local health departments to consider local conditions and factors when deciding to implement prevention strategies
- Notification to the local health department of 2 or more identified COVID positive cases in a common group of any kind is required for outbreak investigations
- When the COVID-19 Community Level indicates high or when the school or ECE programs is experiencing an outbreak as determined by the local health department, schools and ECE programs should consider adding layered prevention strategies to maintain safe, in-person learning
- Schools and ECE programs may also consider suspending high-risk activities to control a school- or program-associated outbreak; schools and ECE programs that are experiencing outbreaks should work with their state or local health department in accordance with state and local regulations.

Reducing Covid Spread

- **Stay home if you are sick, test immediately, follow exposure and isolation protocols as needed**
- Schools and ECE programs should be disinfecting surfaces at least once a day to reduce germ spread
- Schools and ECE programs should optimize ventilation and improve indoor air quality to reduce germs spreading in the air

Symptomatic Students or Staff

- Students or staff who come to school or an ECE program with symptoms or develop symptoms while at school or an ECE program should be asked to wear a well-fitting mask or respirator while in the building and be sent home as soon as possible and encouraged to get tested if testing is unavailable at school. Symptomatic people who cannot wear a mask should be separated from others as much as possible; those children should be supervised by a designated caregiver who is wearing a well-fitting mask or respirator until they leave school grounds.
- Schools and ECEs should develop mechanisms to ensure that people with COVID-19 isolate away from others and do not attend school until they have completed home isolation. Follow the isolation protocol guidance for those who are COVID-19 positive.
- People who are not able to wear a well-fitting mask or respirator should either isolate for 10 full days or follow the test-based strategy to determine when they can safely return to the school or ECE setting without a mask, continuing to isolate until testing criteria have been met.
- If a person with COVID-19 has been inside a school or ECE facility within last 24 hours, the space should be cleaned and disinfected.

Testing

- Schools and ECE programs can offer diagnostic testing for students and staff with symptoms of COVID-19 or who were exposed to someone with COVID-19 in the K-12 or ECE setting, or refer them to a community testing site, healthcare provider, or to use an at-home test.
- The CDC no longer recommends routine screening testing in K-12 schools. However, at a high COVID-19 Community Level, K-12 schools and ECE programs can consider implementing screening testing for students and staff, no matter their vaccination status, for high-risk activities (for example, close contact sports, band, choir, theater); at key times in the year, for example before/after large events (such as prom, tournaments, group travel); and when returning from breaks (such as, holidays, spring break, at the beginning of the school year).
- Due to increased and forceful exhalation that occurs during physical activity, some sports can put players, coaches, trainers, and others at increased risk for getting and spreading the virus that causes COVID-19. Similar risks may exist for other extracurricular activities, such as band, choir, theater, and other school clubs that meet indoors and entail increased exhalation. At a high COVID-19 Community Level, schools and ECE programs should consider implementing screening testing for high-risk activities such as indoor sports and extracurricular activities prior to those events. Schools and ECE programs may consider temporarily stopping these activities to control a school- or program-associated outbreak, or during periods of high COVID-19 Community Levels.

Quarantining

- Quarantine is no longer recommended for people who are exposed to COVID-19 except in certain high-risk congregate settings such as correctional facilities, homeless shelters, and nursing homes. In schools and ECE settings, which are generally not considered high-risk congregate settings, people who were exposed to COVID-19 should follow the exposure protocol, wear a well-fitting mask and get tested.
- While the Mask to Stay/Test to Play protocol is no longer being recommended, if any school or ECE program chooses to continue requiring quarantine, they may also choose to continue Mask/Test to Stay/Play.