COVID-19 News for Schools

Dear Colleagues,

We are excited to bring you this newsletter with COVID-19 related resources and strategies for K-12 schools. Thank you for all you continue to do to keep schools safe and healthy.

COVID-19 RESOURCE HIGHLIGHT

Understanding Exposure Risk

Knowing one's exposure risk can help school community members prevent the spread of COVID-19, especially when returning to school from school breaks. CDC's "Understanding Exposure Risk" can help staff and students to assess and understand their individual exposure risk based on 6 different factors. These factors include:

- **Length of time:** How long were they with an infected person?
- **Cough or heavy breathing**: Was the infected person coughing, singing, shouting, or breathing heavily?
- **Symptoms:** Did the infected person have symptoms at the time?
- **Masks:** Were they, the infected person, or both wearing a respirator or high-quality mask (for example, N95)?
- **Ventilation and filtration:** How well-ventilated was the space they shared with the infected person?
- **Distance:** How close was the infected person?

COVID-19 Community Levels may also help people understand their risk of exposure to COVID-19. COVID-19 Community Levels are determined by examining the latest COVID-19 data and can help guide individuals and communities regarding appropriate steps to prevent the further spread of COVID-19. These prevention strategies may also help mitigate the spread of other illnesses such as flu and RSV.

- To check your COVID-19 Community Level, follow this link and scroll down to the "COVID-19 County Check" section.
- From there, select the *State and County* from the two drop-down menus and click the "Go" button to display the county's current Community Level. This data is updated weekly on Thursdays.

Early identification of cases to ensure that affected individuals stay home and isolate is critical to preventing transmission. Schools should continue to prioritize the safety and well-being of students, teachers, and staff by notifying parents and guardians when known close contact with someone who tested positive for, or has symptoms of, COVID-19 occurs at school. Those who have been exposed can find practical information and recommendations on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC's) "What to Do If You Were Exposed" page.

Travel

Students, staff, and their families may find [CDC's Travel](#) page useful for suggested COVID-19 mitigation strategies as they plan for time away during school breaks. This page provides information about recommendations and/or requirements for domestic, international, or cruise ship travel.

At-Home/Over-the-Counter (OTC) Serial Testing Update

On November 1, 2022, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) revised emergency use authorization of COVID-19 antigen tests. When using at-home/OTC COVID-19 tests, the FDA now recommends serial, or repeat, testing when a first or second test result is negative for those with or without symptoms. Available data show that serial/repeat testing after a negative test increases the chance of an accurate result for those with or without symptoms. For more information, please visit: https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/coronavirus-covid-19-and-medical-devices/understanding-home-otc-covid-19-antigen-diagnostic-test-results.

The New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) has created a list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) as a resource related to the revised COVID-19 antigen test EUA from the FDA; this document can be located at https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2023/03/faq_serial_testing_requirements.pdf.

COVID-19 TESTING RESOURCES

- Information on COVID-19 testing resources for New York schools can be found at https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/schools-youth/#testing-resources-for-schools
- Additional COVID-19 testing resources, including testing locations and information about obtaining free OTC tests for households, can be found at covid.gov/tests
- Find locations that offer free COVID-19 testing at https://testinglocator.cdc.gov/

HELPFUL LINKS AND CONTACTS

- Information on COVID-19 Community Levels: [COVID-19 by County | CDC](#)
- NY COVID-19 Data: [COVID-19 Data in New York | Department of Health (ny.gov)](#)
- CDC Guidance: [Operational Guidance for K-12 Schools and Early Care and Education Programs to Support Safe In-Person Learning | CDC](#)
- NYSDOH Schools Guidance: [Schools & Youth | Department of Health (ny.gov)](#)
- Local Health Department (LHD) Contact Information: https://www.nysacho.org/directory/
- For questions about COVID-19 mitigation or testing please contact your LHD using the contact information above, or the NYSDOH at SchoolQuestionsCOVID@health.ny.gov