

COVID-19 Exposure Management Plan Guidance in TK-12 Schools

Recent Updates: (Changes highlighted in yellow)

9/17/2021:

- Added a requirement to report all COVID-19 hospitalizations or deaths among students or staff to DPH.
- Clarified the definition of a close contact in a TK-12 classroom or school group.
- Added an option of modified quarantine for TK-12 students who have verified mask-to-mask exposure with a confirmed case at school during the exposure period. Modified quarantine may only be applied under specific circumstances during the quarantine period which are outlined in this guidance.
- Updated the testing requirement for shortened quarantine: quarantine can end after Day 7 if a diagnostic viral test is collected on Day 5 or later from the date of last exposure and tests negative.
- Clarified that school employees may return to work after completing the quarantine period per Public Health's Emergency Quarantine Order.
- Added a link to community-based testing sites for testing resources.
- Reorganized content to simplify reading and comprehension.

A targeted public health response to contain COVID-19 exposures at a community-level can help maximize the impact of the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (DPH) COVID-19 response.

Primary and Secondary Schools serving students from Transitional Kindergarten through Grade 12 (TK-12 Schools) are trusted community partners that can help DPH improve the timeliness and impact of the Public Health response through rapid initiation of a COVID-19 Exposure Management Plan (EMP). Immediate implementation of an EMP when a single case of COVID-19 is identified at a school can accelerate the ability to contain the spread of infection and prevent outbreaks from occurring.

The steps for managing exposures to 1, 2, and 3 or more COVID-19 cases at TK-12 Schools are described below and summarized in Appendix A. Because TK-12 Schools will vary in the level of resources available for COVID-19 exposure management, *required* steps are the minimum elements that must be included in the EMP. *Recommended* steps include optional elements for exposure management where school resources are sufficient. The requirements and recommendations presented are specific to TK-12 instructional and non-instructional facilities serving TK-12 Schools. For the purposes of this plan, the word "School" applies to both TK-12 instructional and non-instructional facilities. Additional resources for TK-12 Schools can be located in the [TK-12 School COVID-19 Toolkit](#).

Exposure Management Planning Prior to Identifying 1 COVID-19 Case at School

- Required:* A designated School COVID-19 Compliance Officer that is responsible for establishing and enforcing all COVID-19 prevention and exposure management protocols and ensuring that staff and students receive education about COVID-19. A designated COVID-19 Compliance Officer who serves as a liaison to DPH for sharing site-level information to facilitate public health action.
- Required:* Seating charts in classrooms and participant rosters for students and staff participating in school extracurricular programs to facilitate identification of close contacts of persons with COVID-19 at the school.

- ✕ *Required:* A plan for all students, employees, and visitors who (1) have symptoms consistent with COVID-19, (2) are quarantined because of exposures at school, or (3) are at a school with an active public health investigation to have access to testing or be tested for COVID-19.
- ✕ *Required:* A plan to report all known COVID-19 hospitalizations and/or deaths among students or staff to DPH by sending a notification to ACDC-Education@ph.lacounty.gov.
- ✕ *Recommended:* If a school elects to implement an asymptomatic screening testing program, staff and students that are not fully vaccinated should be prioritized for regular testing as an important part of identifying infections early to prevent transmission on campus. Based on the current level of community transmission, if there is ample testing capacity it is recommended that fully vaccinated individuals be included in a school's asymptomatic screening testing program.
- ✕ *Recommended:* The Schools that choose to implement a symptom screening program are advised to apply DPH guidance on [Decision Pathways](#) for persons who have not been tested yet for COVID-19 but screen positive for symptoms prior to school entry or while at school.

Exposure Management for 1 COVID-19 Case at School

- ✕ *Required:* After identifying 1 confirmed COVID-19 case on campus, the School Compliance Officer instructs the case to follow Home Isolation Instructions for COVID-19 (ph.lacounty.gov/covidisolation). NOTE: a confirmed COVID-19 case is an individual who has a positive COVID-19 test.
- ✕ *Required:* School Compliance Officer provides a copy of the Public Health Emergency [Isolation Order](#) and informs the case that DPH will contact the case directly through the DPH Case and Contact Investigation Program to collect additional information and issue the Health Officer Order for Case Isolation.
- ✕ *Required:* The Compliance Officer works to identify all individuals in the School who have had an exposure to the confirmed positive case during their infectious period (Close Contacts).
 - A case is considered to be infectious from 2 days before their symptoms first appeared until the time they are no longer required to be isolated (i.e., no fever for at least 24 hours, without the use of medicine that reduce fevers AND other symptoms have improved AND at least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared). A person with a positive COVID-19 test but no symptoms is considered infectious from 2 days before their test was taken until 10 days after their test.
 - Close Contact: A person is considered to have been exposed to a case during the infectious period if at least one of the following criteria are met:
 - Being within 6 feet of the infected person for 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period.
 - Having had unprotected contact with the infected person's body fluids and/or secretions of a person with confirmed COVID-19 (e.g., being coughed or sneezed on, sharing utensils or saliva, or providing care without using appropriate protective equipment).
 - Individuals in the classroom or school group should NOT be considered a close contact unless the program is reasonably sure that they meet the above definition of a close contact. Individuals should NOT be considered a close contact solely because they were in the same classroom or school group as a person with confirmed COVID-19. If the program cannot determine who is a close contact to a person with confirmed COVID-19 at school, they should contact Public Health immediately for technical assistance. For guidance specific to identification of close contacts in a Youth Sports program, please refer to the [Exposure Management Plan for Youth Recreational Sports Programs](#).

X *Required:* School Compliance Officer must notify DPH of (1) employees, children, and visitors with confirmed COVID-19 who were on campus at any point within the 14 days prior to the illness onset date (school-associated case) and (2) persons on campus who were exposed to the infected person during the infectious period. The illness onset date is the first date of COVID-19 symptoms or the COVID-19 test date, whichever is earlier.

- *Required:* All school-associated COVID-19 cases and persons identified to have had an exposure to cases on campus should be reported online through the secure web application: <http://www.redcap.link/lacdph.educationsector.covidreport>. If online reporting is not possible, reporting can be done manually by downloading and completing the [COVID-19 Case and Contact Line List for the Education Sector](#) and sending it to ACDC-Education@ph.lacounty.gov. All case notifications should be submitted within 1 business day of being notified of the case.
- *Recommended:* Schools that are reporting a school-associated COVID-19 case to DPH for the first time or need assistance on COVID-19 exposure management can call the TK-12 School COVID-19 Case Reporting Call Center, Monday through Friday from 8:00AM to 5:00PM. School administrators that do not have the Call Center number should contact ACDC-Education@ph.lacounty.gov for the number.

X *Required:* All persons identified to have had an exposure to a COVID-19 positive case at school are notified by the School Compliance Officer of the exposure through a letter or other communication strategies and a copy of the [Public Health Emergency Quarantine Order](#). A School Exposure Notification letter template is available at: [COVID-19 Template Notification Letters for Education Settings](#) (Template #1). The notification of exposure should include the following messages:

- DPH is coordinating with the school to contact persons who are identified as having had close contact with the school-associated case to gather additional information and provide guidance on testing and quarantine.
- Employees with a campus exposure should follow guidance outlined in Cal/OSHA COVID-19 Prevention [Emergency Temporary Standards](#) (ETS). However if an employee's quarantine period ends before they meet [Cal/OSHA's criteria for return-to-work](#), they may return to the Worksite(s) as soon as they have cleared quarantine per the [Health Officer Quarantine Order](#). A summary of requirements is provided in the Public Health guidance document on [Responding to COVID-19 in the Workplace](#).
- Persons with an exposure to the case should test for COVID-19 and inform the school of test results. This will determine the extent of disease spread at the school and serve as a basis for further control measures. Testing resources include: Employee Health Services or Occupational Health Services, Student Health Center, Personal Healthcare Providers, [LA City and County Testing Sites: covid19.lacounty.gov/testing](#), and [Community-Based Testing Sites \(local health centers and pharmacies\)](#). Individuals who need assistance finding a medical provider can call the LA County Information line 2-1-1, which is available 24/7.
- Exposed persons who are not [exempted from quarantine \(see exemptions below\)](#) must self-quarantine (stay in their home or another residence, separate from others) and monitor for symptoms as outlined in [Quarantine and Other Instructions for Close Contacts](#). As long as they do not develop symptoms of COVID-19 they may end quarantine either:
 - After 10 full days have passed from their last known contact to the infectious case (as defined above). Activities may resume starting on Day 11. They must continue to monitor their health and adhere to COVID-19 prevention precautions through Day 14.

- After 7 full days have passed from their last known contact to the infectious case if they have a negative viral test result from a specimen collected on or after Day 5 from the date of last exposure to the case. Activities may resume starting on Day 8. They must continue to monitor their health and adhere to COVID-19 prevention precautions through Day 14. Note the test must be an FDA-authorized viral COVID-19 test, including a Nucleic Acid Amplification Test (NAAT, such as PCR) or an Antigen test, that is collected and performed in a healthcare setting or certified testing site.
- The following close contacts are exempt from quarantine provided they remain asymptomatic:
 - Persons who are [fully vaccinated](#).
 - Persons who have recovered from laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 within the last 90 days.

Even though they do not need to quarantine, they must monitor for symptoms and strictly adhere to COVID-19 precautions for 14 days from their last exposure. It is recommended that fully vaccinated persons get a viral test 3-5 days after their last exposure. No testing is recommended for persons who have recently recovered from COVID-19. See [Quarantine and Other Instructions for Close Contacts](#).

- *Optional Modified Quarantine for TK-12 Students.* Modified quarantine allows asymptomatic students, under self-quarantine orders, who were exposed to a person with diagnosed COVID-19 in any school setting where students are supervised by school staff (indoors, outdoors, or on a school buses) to continue in-person academic activities that are part of the regular school curriculum and provided during school hours. As a reminder, persons who are fully vaccinated and/or have recovered from laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 within the last 90 days do NOT need to self-quarantine. An asymptomatic student under self-quarantine orders may be approved for modified quarantine if specific criteria outlined below are met. If these criteria cannot be met, then the exposed student must remain in [home quarantine](#) as outlined above.

- (1) The exposure was to a person with a COVID-19 diagnosis in any school setting where students are supervised by school staff (indoors, outdoors, or on school buses).
- (2) The exposed student remains asymptomatic.
- (3) The exposed student AND the person with a COVID-19 diagnosis MUST have each worn a mask consistently and correctly during the entire exposure period. This includes any outdoor exposures. Prior to applying modified quarantine, verification is required of mask-to-mask exposure between the person with a COVID-19 diagnosis and the exposed student. School Administrators must keep records of this verification and provide to Public Health upon request.
- (4) The exposed student is not part of a TK-12 outbreak. Due to the high rate of secondary transmission in outbreaks, students with an outbreak exposure must fully quarantine at home. They may be released after Day 7, if they have a negative viral test result from a specimen collected on or after Day 5 from the date of last exposure to a confirmed COVID-19 case in the outbreak, provided they remain without symptoms.
- (5) Students under modified quarantine are still subject to the [Health Officer Quarantine Order](#) and must stay at home for the duration of quarantine, except for in-person instruction.
- (6) Students under modified quarantine are required to wear a mask indoors and outdoors and on school buses, while at school. The exception is for eating and

drinking, where they must be at least 6 feet away from other students and preferably outdoors.

- (7) Students under modified quarantine must be tested twice a week using an FDA-authorized viral COVID-19 test (e.g., PCR or Antigen) in a healthcare setting or certified testing site. It is recommended that the first test be conducted immediately after exposure (Day 1 or Day 2 from date of last exposure) and the second test be conducted at least 3 days later. Students may be released from quarantine after Day 7 from the date of last exposure if their second test is conducted on Day 5 or later, the test is negative, and the student remains without symptoms.
- (8) It is strongly recommended that unvaccinated, asymptomatic individuals who are NOT identified as close contacts but who were present in a school classroom or school activity with a confirmed case be tested weekly for two weeks (14 days) following the date of last exposure in the classroom/activity. If capacity allows, consider also testing asymptomatic, fully vaccinated individuals that were present in the school classroom/activity with a confirmed case but were not close contacts.

X *Recommended:* School Compliance Officer will determine whether additional notification is needed to inform the wider school community about the school exposure and precautions being taken to prevent spread of COVID-19. A general notification letter template is available at: [COVID-19 Template Notification Letters for Education Settings \(Template #2\)](#).

Exposure Management for 2 COVID-19 Cases at School within a 14-day Period

- X** *Required:* After identifying 2 confirmed cases within a 14-day period, the school follows the *required* steps for 1 confirmed case.
- X** *Required:* School Compliance Officer consults with Public Health to determine whether the 2 cases are epidemiologically linked, meaning that the two affected individuals were both present at some point in the same setting during the same time period while either or both were infectious.* Schools should contact DPH for assistance in determining whether cases are epidemiologically linked by emailing ACDC-Education@ph.lacounty.gov or by calling the TK-12 School COVID-19 Case Reporting Call Center.

**A case is considered to be infectious from 2 days before symptoms first appeared until they are no longer required to be isolated (i.e., no fever for at least 24 hours without the use of medicine that reduces fever AND other symptoms have improved AND at least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared). A person with a positive COVID-19 test but no symptoms is considered to be infectious from 2 days before their test was taken until 10 days after their test.*

Determination of epidemiological links between cases may require further investigation to assess exposure history and identify all possible locations and persons that may have been exposed to the case while infectious at the site. NOTE: Epidemiologically linked cases include persons with identifiable connections to each other such as sharing a physical space (e.g., in a classroom, school event, sports team, other extracurricular activities, school transportation, office site), indicating a higher likelihood of linked spread of disease in that setting rather than sporadic transmission from the broader community. If epidemiological links exist, DPH will advise the school on important steps to take and communications to students and employees on precautions to take to prevent further spread at the school, including implementation of site- specific interventions for infection control.

Exposure Management for ≥ 3 COVID-19 Cases at School within a 14-day Period

X *Required:* If the school identifies a cluster of 3 or more confirmed cases within a 14-day period, the school should proceed with the following steps:

- Report the cluster immediately to DPH by calling the TK-12 School COVID-19 Case Reporting Call Center or by submitting a report online at: <http://www.redcap.link/lacdph.educationsector.covidreport>. If online reporting is not possible, reporting can be done manually by downloading and completing the [COVID-19 Case and Contact Line List for the Education Sector](#) and sending it to ACDC-Education@ph.lacounty.gov.
- DPH will review the submitted information to determine whether the outbreak criteria described below have been met and will notify the school within 1 business day on next steps.
- Outbreak Criteria: At least 3 confirmed cases of COVID-19 within a 14-day period of each other in a specified group* with members who are epidemiologically linked, do not share a household, and are not a close contact of each other outside of the campus.

*Specified groups include persons that share a common membership at school (e.g., classroom, school event, sport teams, other school extracurricular activities, school transportation, office site). Epidemiological links require the infected persons to have been present at some point in the same setting during the same time period while infectious.

- NOTE: For overnight camps, a “household cohort” means cabinmates (campers and staff) who are staying together in a cabin, bunkhouse, or similar space. Additional guidance regarding overnight camps is located in the [Reopening Protocol for Overnight Organized/Children’s Camps: Appendix K-1](#).
 - If outbreak criteria are not met, DPH will advise the school to continue with routine exposure management.
 - If outbreak criteria are met, DPH will notify the school that an outbreak investigation has been activated and a public health investigator will communicate directly with the school to coordinate the outbreak response.

Appendix A: Steps for Managing Exposures to COVID-19 Cases at School

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| 1 Case | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) <i>Required:</i> School instructs the case to follow COVID-19 Home Isolation Instructions.2) <i>Required:</i> School informs the case that DPH will contact the case directly to collect additional information and issue Health Officer Order for Isolation.3) <i>Required:</i> School works with DPH to identify school contacts. Schools can call the TK-12 School COVID-19 Case Reporting Call Center for assistance with identification of close contacts and exposure management.4) <i>Required:</i> School notifies school contacts of exposure. School contacts are instructed to quarantine at home, test for COVID-19 due to their exposure, and issued the Public Health Emergency Quarantine Order. Students who are approved for modified quarantine may continue in-person academic activities that are part of the regular school curriculum and provided during school hours, but they are still under the Health Officer Quarantine Order and may not participate in extracurricular activities at school, including sports, and activities in the community setting while in quarantine.5) <i>Required:</i> School submits a report to DPH within 1 business day with information on the confirmed case and persons who were exposed to the case at the site. Schools that are reporting a case for the first time or require assistance in exposure management should call the TK-12 School COVID-19 Case Reporting Call Center or email ACDC-Education@ph.lacounty.gov for assistance.6) <i>Recommended:</i> School sends general notification to inform the school community of the school exposure and precautions taken to prevent spread. |
| 2 Cases | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) <i>Required:</i> Follow required steps for 1 confirmed case.2) <i>Required:</i> If the 2 cases occurred within 14 days of each other, school consults with DPH to determine whether the cases have epidemiological (epi) links. If epi links exist, school implements additional infection control measures. Schools can call the TK-12 School COVID-19 Case Reporting Call Center or email ACDC-Education@ph.lacounty.gov for assistance in determining whether cases have epidemiological links. |
| 3+ Cases | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) <i>Required:</i> If a cluster of 3 or more cases occurred within 14 days of each other, the school immediately notifies DPH by calling the TK-12 School COVID-19 Case Reporting Call Center or reporting online at: http://www.redcap.link/lacdph.educationsector.covidreport.2) <i>Required:</i> DPH determines if the outbreak criteria have been met. If outbreak criteria are met, a DPH outbreak investigation is activated, and a public health investigator will contact the school to coordinate the outbreak investigation. |