



Important Health Updates for Students in Pennsylvania Schools

The PA Department of Education and PA Department of Health recently adopted the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) updated protocols provided below. Y.A.L.E. School will conscientiously adhere to the revised guidelines in the best interest of our entire school community. We ask that parents review the updates before the start of school and join us in following the essential health prevention strategies revised by the CDC and recommended by state health and education officials. Please also refer to the complete CDC document [Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools](#) for further information.

Current Updates as of August 13, 2021

Face Coverings and Masks

- Given new evidence on the B.1.617.2 (Delta) variant, the CDC has updated the guidance for fully vaccinated people. CDC recommends universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors to K-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status.
- The CDC also highlights that schools may consider universal masking based on the needs of the school community, such as level of community transmission* and local vaccination coverage.
- In general, people do not need to wear masks when outdoors.
- Per the [CDC order](#) on wearing masks on public transportation, regardless of the school mask policy, masks are required to be worn by passengers and drivers on school buses.

Physical Distancing

- The CDC recommends maintaining at least 3 feet of physical distance between students in classrooms, with additional layered mitigation efforts employed if distance recommendations would prevent a school from fully reopening.

Contact Tracing, Isolation, and Quarantine

- Schools should continue to work with DOH or county or municipal health departments (CMHD) to complete contact tracing for individuals diagnosed or exposed to COVID-19. As part of the contact tracing process, DOH and CMHDs will continue to work with schools to gather information about potential close contacts.
- Close contact is defined as someone who was within 6 feet for a total of 15 minutes or more within 2 days prior to illness onset, regardless of whether the contact was wearing a mask. See exceptions below:

- In the K–12 indoor classroom setting, the close contact definition excludes students who were within 3 to 6 feet of an infected student (laboratory-confirmed or a clinically compatible illness) where:
 - both students were engaged in consistent and correct use of well-fitting face masks; and
 - other K–12 school prevention strategies (such as universal and correct mask use, physical distancing, increased ventilation) were in place in the K–12 school setting.
- This exception does not apply to teachers, staff, or other adults in the indoor classroom setting.

Responding to Cases

When a case of COVID-19 is identified in a school setting, schools should refer to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) protocol outlining [what to do if a student becomes sick or reports a new COVID-19 diagnosis at school](#).

In addition to following the above CDC flowchart, schools should continue to work with the Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH) or county or municipal health departments (CMHD) to complete contact tracing for individuals diagnosed or exposed to COVID-19. As part of the contact tracing process, DOH and CMHDs will continue to work with schools to gather information about potential close contacts.

Schools within a CMHD jurisdiction should work with their local health department when responding to cases of COVID-19 in a school setting.

Vaccination

- Some prevention strategies outlined in the CDC guidance vary by COVID-19 vaccination status. The CDC guidance indicates K-12 schools that maintain documentation of student and school staff COVID-19 vaccination status may use that information, consistent with applicable laws and regulations, to inform masking, physical distancing, testing, and contact tracing efforts, as well as quarantine and isolation protocols.
- If a school plans to request voluntary submission of COVID-19 vaccination status, [standard protocols that are used to collect and store health status or immunization information from students should be followed](#)

Sports and Extracurricular Activities

- Per the CDC guidance, individuals who are fully vaccinated no longer need to wear masks or physically distance when participating in sports and extracurricular activities.
- CDC recommends K-12 schools implement prevention strategies, including masking and physical distancing, during sports and extracurricular activities for those who participate and are not fully vaccinated.
- The CDC recommends that schools consider screening testing for those participating in sports who are not fully vaccinated to facilitate safe participation and reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19. The [CDC's Screening Testing Recommendations for K-12 Schools by Level of Community Transmission](#) provides recommendations for screening testing by level of community transmission. As outlined in the table, when a community exhibits a high level of community transmission, the CDC recommends canceling or holding high-risk sports or extracurricular activities virtually to protect in-person learning, unless all participants are fully vaccinated.

* In alignment with CDC guidance, categories for level of community transmission include low, moderate, substantial, and high. School leaders and communities can use the [CDC's COVID-19 Data Tracker](#) to determine the level of community transmission in their county.