

# School Health Policy

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Developed collaboratively with labor unions, the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), and NYC Test + Trace Corps (T2), this policy provides guidance for schools regarding:

- Staying healthy while at school
- Daily health screenings for students and school-based staff
- What to do if a student or staff member shows signs of COVID-19 while at school
- Outreach to the Situation Room

## Staying Healthy While at School

Vaccination is currently the leading public health prevention strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic. People who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 are at low risk of symptomatic or severe infection.

Currently, people five years and older are eligible for COVID-19 vaccinations. Schools can promote vaccinations among eligible students by providing information about COVID-19 vaccination, encouraging vaccine

trust and confidence, and establishing supportive policies and practices that make getting vaccinated as easy and convenient as possible.

In partnership with the DOHMH, the NYCDOE is emphasizing the use of multiple layers of protection against COVID-19 and encouraging those who are eligible to get vaccinated. Strategies to prevent the spread of COVID-19 include:

- Properly wearing a face covering at all times when on DOE property;
- Increasing ventilation, wherever possible;
- Washing and sanitizing hands regularly;
- Staying home when sick, after being in close contact with a person with COVID-19, or if someone in your household is exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms;
- Ensuring students maintain a distance of at least three feet from other students; and most importantly,
- If eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine, getting the vaccine.

## **Physical Distancing**

Following CDC and NYSED guidance, schools should provide a minimum of three feet of physical distancing, where possible. Both the CDC and NYSED emphasize that physical distancing requirements should not prevent students from fully returning to school this year.

Three feet distancing is not required for passing between classes and in some elevators. For schools where an elevator is required in order to get into the school, three feet distancing is not required, but all individuals in the elevator must properly wear a face covering and the elevator ride should not take more than ten minutes. Schools should discourage student use of elevators in buildings where elevators are not essential to accessing the school.

For certain activities, including lunch, additional safety measures will be used. When eating, students must maintain three feet of physical distance and should be seated in such a way that they are facing away from one another. For example, students may sit on a single side of a cafeteria bench, three feet

apart. Schools may utilize other spaces, including but not limited to classrooms, auditoriums, gyms, and outdoor spaces for cafeteria use.

Elementary school students should sit with their classes wherever possible. If feasible, elementary school students should have assigned seats and schools should keep a seating chart.

In classrooms or cafeterias where three feet thresholds cannot be met, the Division of School Facilities and Space Planning will work with schools to increase ventilation through the use of additional air purifiers. Schools should work with their custodial staff to increase ventilation in these rooms.

## **Face Coverings**

Mandatory use of face coverings must be enforced for all individuals (unless they have a medical exemption) while on school property, on school buses, and on any school-sponsored transportation, regardless of the individual's COVID-19 vaccine status. [A face covering](#) (Open external link) is any well-secured cloth or disposable mask that covers a person's nose and mouth. A face covering with an exhalation valve or vent cannot be used on school property as exhalation valves allow unfiltered exhaled air to escape to others. Face shields are not appropriate substitutes for face coverings. Please see the [Face Covering guidance](#) for more information.

### **Face Covering for Staff Supporting Students with Significant Needs (Including but not limited to Students served by District 75)**

Adults may not always be able to maintain physical distance from students, especially when:

- Supporting students with feeding and/or ambulation
- Assisting students with clothing changes
- Supporting students with toileting
- Providing certain interventions during a related service
- Supporting students who display behaviors that increase risk of disease transmission (e.g., touching, spitting, lack of bodily awareness)

In such situations, the adult must wear a [well-fitting face covering](#)([Open external link](#)), regardless of the adult's COVID-19 vaccination status. Acceptable face coverings for COVID-19 include but are not limited to cloth-based 2-ply face coverings and disposable masks that securely cover both the mouth and nose (bandanas, scarves and single-layer "gaiters" are not acceptable face coverings). If available, KN95 face coverings are recommended for the above activities. It is strongly recommended that the adult also wear a face shield when physical distance from a student cannot be consistently maintained. If an adult is supporting a student over the age of 2 who cannot wear a face covering, the adult must wear a face shield in addition to a face covering. Adults must wear gloves when assisting students with toileting/diaper changes. Glove use is also strongly recommended when assisting with feeding or otherwise coming into contact with a student's skin or secretions.

If the adult touches their face or needs to remove their mask momentarily for any reason, they must increase the distance between themselves and the student to at least six feet and sanitize hands before returning to close contact with the student.

In addition, staff may use alternate PPE (e.g., coverings that are transparent at or around the mouth) for therapies or interventions that require visualization of the movement of the lips and/or mouths (e.g., speech therapy) or as needed when supporting certain students (e.g., students with hearing impairments) who benefit from being able to see more of the adult's face.

Face shields and gloves will be made available upon request to any adult performing the above activities.

### **Distribution of KN95 Ma sks**

Teachers may ask for a KN95 mask; school should give one to any staff member who asks. These masks are to be used for five days.

Teachers who return from isolation from a positive test on Day 6 **must** be given a KN95 mask if they do not already have one. This mask must be worn from Day 6 to Day 10.

## **COVID-19 Surveillance Testing**

Regular COVID-19 testing provides school communities and public health experts with valuable information. Please visit [the COVID-19 Testing page](#) for the most up-to-date information. Families can give consent for testing through their student's [New York City Schools Account \(NYCSA\)](#)([Open external link](#)).

## **Daily Health Screenings**

### **Operationalizing Health Screenings**

To ensure that staff and students do not report to school if they have or potentially may have COVID-19 or are feeling ill, a health screening must be completed, ideally at home, by all students, staff, and visitors before entering NYCDOE school facilities.

Principals must have procedures in place to ensure that everyone who enters the building each day has passed the health screening at home or prior to entry to the school building. Schools should have a designated staff person to review the incoming reports of screening by staff and parent/guardian and to attest that they are completed.

To operationalize this guidance please note that as per [NYSDOH](#)([Open external link](#)), schools are prohibited from keeping records of student, faculty, staff, and visitor health data (e.g., the specific health data of an individual), but are permitted to maintain records that confirm individuals were screened and the result of such screening (e.g., pass/fail, cleared/not cleared). Any paper questionnaires that are collected for purposes of completing the daily screening attestation requirement must be immediately shredded to protect student, faculty, staff, and visitor health data. Students and school-based staff can or cannot report to school based on their results of the following questions in the NYCDOE's [daily health screener](#)([Open external link](#)).

### **Using the Online Health Screening Tool**

NYCDOE families/students are encouraged to use [the online health screening tool](#)([Open external link](#)) to pre-screen themselves before entering a NYCDOE building. Upon entering the school facility, families/students will

be asked to provide the results of their screening either by showing the email on their smartphone or a printout of the results. Families should support students as needed with this online screening questionnaire and should ensure students have proper documentation for morning entry. Since the health screening asks if an individual has a fever, schools should provide DOE thermometers for home use to any family that requests one.

For students who travel via [school bus](#), families must complete the screening, including checking their child's temperature prior to boarding a school bus to make certain that their child is well enough to ride on the bus and attend school. Bus personnel will not be conducting screenings of children prior to boarding the bus. School site designated staff will be checking for completion of student health screening at entry. Students without a daily screening clearance will need to be supported in completing this process at the school, particularly young children.

For morning student drop off, every effort should be made to ensure that student health screenings are completed prior to families dropping off their children to school, especially for younger students.

NYCDOE employees are strongly encouraged to use the online tool to pre-screen themselves before entering a NYCDOE building. Upon entering the facility, staff will be asked to provide the results of the screening either by showing the email on their phones or a printout of the results. The screening results for school-based staff are valid until midnight of the same day. School-based staff must show clearance every time they reenter a NYCDOE building.

### **Paper Copy of Health Screening Questionnaire**

If students are not able to pre-screen using the online tool, schools must provide families with several copies of the health screening questionnaire so families can complete the questionnaire at home. If staff are not able to pre-screen using the online tool, staff should print and complete the [Health Screening Questionnaire document](#)([Open external link](#)) for completion on a daily basis at home. Translated versions will be available shortly.

### **In-Person Health Screening at School**

If NYCDOE families are unable to pre-screen their child(ren) at home using either the online tool or [paper questionnaire](#)([Open external link](#)), families will need to complete their child’s screening in-person at the school building prior to their child’s entry. Schools should determine the best way to implement on-site screening for students using either the online health screening tool or paper copies of the screening questionnaire. Young children may require additional support from a staff member.

If NYCDOE school staff are not able to pre-screen themselves prior to coming to work, they will be required to complete an in-person screening assessment prior to entering the building. The screening results for school-based staff are valid until midnight of the same day and school-based staff must show clearance every time they reenter a NYCDOE building. The paper version of the health screening form can be found on the [Health Screening Questionnaire document](#)([Open external link](#)).

### **Supporting Younger Students and District 75 Students with In-Person Health Screenings**

For younger students who arrive at school without a completed questionnaire and are unable to respond to the health screening questions, the school should make an effort to contact a family member for support with screening.

However, if a parent/guardian is unable to be contacted, the school should check the student’s temperature to ensure that it is below 100.0 degrees F and ask the student about their well- being (e.g., “How are you feeling today?”).

For District 75 students who arrive at school without a completed questionnaire, the school should make an effort to contact a family member for support with screening. If it is not feasible to contact the student's family member prior to the student's entry, the school should check the student’s temperature to ensure that it is below 100.0 degrees F and ask the student about their well-being (e.g., “How are you feeling today?”). In District 75 schools, temperature check alone prior to entry is acceptable if a student is not developmentally able to answer questions regarding their well-being. In the event that contact with the family was not possible prior to the student's entry, once the student is in class the school should conduct outreach to the family to complete the screener as well as remind the family that the screening must be conducted at home before the student leaves for school.

## **Student Pick Up**

If a student fails a health screening or shows symptoms of COVID-19, as mentioned above, the student should be escorted to a school-designated area and the guardian must be contacted to pick up the student. If the guardian cannot be reached, the school must contact the emergency contacts on the student's Blue Card. Please note that failure of the guardian or emergency contact to pick up the student in a timely manner does not warrant a report to the New York State Central Registry (SCR), unless accompanied by additional concerns or suspicions regarding the student's safety which would require that a report be made in accordance with [Chancellor's Regulation A-750](#)([Open external link](#)).

### **Failing a Health Screening: Students**

Any unaccompanied student who fails their health screening (i.e., answers yes to any of the health screening questions below) should be escorted to a school-designated room per the guidance below and must be picked up by a family member. For students who fail a health screening and are dropped off by a guardian, these students should be sent home with their guardians prior to entering school, where possible.

### **Failing a Health Screening: School-Based Staff**

Any employee who fails their health screening will be refused entry to the building by the School Safety Agent/NYCDOE Safety Officer.

## **Symptoms of COVID-19 While at School**

### **Student Shows Symptoms of COVID-19 While at School**

For the 2021-22 school year, schools are not required to have an Isolation Room. All schools must have an area designated to hold students who are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, but this room can be used for other purposes when not holding an ill student. Schools and campuses should decide on space that can be used. Regardless of the designated area, the space must be thoroughly cleaned after holding a student who showed signs of COVID-19. No additional staffing is needed for this designated space, as the nurse or campus health care professional will assess potentially ill students.

Should a school have the space, the school may designate a room to be solely used for holding students who show symptoms of COVID-19.

Schools should follow the steps below when a student shows symptoms of COVID-19 during the school day:

1. A classroom teacher or school aide notifies the nurse that a student is not well and experiencing one or more COVID-like symptoms, including:
  - Fever of 100.0 degrees F or higher or chills,
  - New cough,
  - New loss of taste or smell, and/or
  - New shortness of breath.
2. The student showing symptoms of COVID-19 will be escorted to the designated area in the school by a staff member wearing appropriate PPE.
3. When the ill student is placed in the designated area, the nurse will be contacted and will come to the designated area and assess the student.
  - Should the nurse/health professional be unavailable at that moment to examine the student and the guardian arrives, the student should leave with the guardian.
  - The nurse will assess if the student was vaccinated against COVID-19 within the past three days.
    - If the student was recently vaccinated, the student may be experiencing post-vaccine symptoms which include fatigue, fever, headache, and/or chills.
4. The area/classroom where the student was showing symptoms must be isolated/closed immediately and cleaned prior to re-occupancy.
5. The school calls the student's guardian for pick up.
6. Upon arrival of the student's guardian, a staff member escorts the student to the visitors' entrance for pick-up by the guardian, reviews the NYCDOE's "Sent Home With Symptoms" letter with the guardian and gives the guardian a home test kit.
7. The staff member will report the incident to the principal. The principal or designee will ensure that the incident involving the ill student is reported to the Situation Room by calling 212-393-2780 and is documented in OORS.

8. The Situation Room will provide the principal with a letter to be disseminated to the school community regarding a student exhibiting COVID-like symptoms during the school day.
  - The school may use any communication platform available to disseminate the letter.
    - The principal asks a school designee, such as the Parent Coordinator or nurse, to follow up with the family on the ill student's condition at regular intervals.
    - The principal and/or designee shares any test results or updates with the Situation Room and in the OORS report.

### **School-Based Staff Member Shows Symptoms of COVID-19 While at School**

Schools should follow the steps below when a staff member shows symptoms of COVID-19 during the school day:

1. The ill staff member immediately notifies the principal that they are not feeling well and are experiencing COVID-like symptoms, such as:

- Fever of 100.0 degrees F or higher or chills,
- New cough,
- New loss of taste or smell and/or,
- New shortness of breath.
- Note, if the staff member was vaccinated against COVID-19 within the past three days, the staff member may be experiencing post-vaccine symptoms which include fatigue, fever, headache, and/or chills. The staff member should go home and can return to work after being fever-free for at least 24 hours without the use of medication.

2. The staff member goes home with a home test kit.

- If the staff member does not immediately leave the building and needs to wait for transportation assistance, the staff member may report to the designated area.

3. The area/classroom where the staff member was showing symptoms must be cleaned as soon as possible.

4. The principal or designee will ensure that the incident involving the ill staff member is reported to the Situation Room by calling 212-393-2780 and files an OORS report.

- The Situation Room will provide the principal with a letter to be disseminated to the school community regarding a staff member having exhibited COVID-like symptoms during the school day.
- The school may use any communication platform available to disseminate the letter.
- The principal and/or designee will follow up with the ill staff member and share any test results or updates with the Situation Room and in the OORS report.

### **Student or School-Based Staff Member Calls Out Sick With COVID-Like Symptoms Or Because Someone In Their Household Is Sick With COVID-Like Symptoms**

Should a student or staff member call out sick because they are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, the principal or designee must call the Situation Room at 212-393-2780 and await next steps. Individuals who were vaccinated against COVID-19 within the past three days may experience post-vaccine symptoms which include fatigue, fever, headache, and/or chills. In that case, the individual should stay home and can return after being fever-free for at least 24 hours without the use of medication.

### **Criteria for Returning to School**

Beginning January 3, schools will distribute free, take-home COVID-19 test kits to any students or staff who exhibit COVID-like symptoms or have been in a classroom where a positive case has been identified.

### **Individuals Experiencing Symptoms**

The individual experiencing symptoms should use both tests within 24 hours. The first test should be used immediately upon returning home, and the

second test should be used 24 hours later. The individual must stay home until two negative home rapid test results have been received. The individual may return to school/work after two negative test results and if they are fever free for 24 hours without fever-reducing medication.

### **Individuals Exposed to COVID at School**

Students and staff who may have been exposed to COVID at school should be given a home test kit to take home. The individual should administer the first home test on the day they receive the test kit and then again on Day 5.

If an individual begins to show symptoms of COVID before Day 5, they should use the test kit immediately, treating themselves as a potential positive case and isolate. It is recommended that the individual also seek a PCR test.

**Please note that this home testing program applies only to school exposures; it does NOT apply to individuals with household exposures.** Students and staff who are not fully vaccinated and experience an exposure outside of the classroom must still quarantine at home for 10 days. If those individuals obtain a lab-confirmed COVID-19 test result on or after Day 5 from exposure, they can return to school from quarantine on Day 8.

### **Testing Positive from a Home Test**

Anyone who tests positive, regardless of vaccine status, from a take home test should immediately report it to the school and begin isolating. Students who test positive must isolate for 10 days and can return to school on Day 11. No negative test is required to return to school.

### **Teachers School-Based Staff Returning from Isolation After Testing Positive**

Teachers and school-based staff who are considered fully vaccinated (two weeks have passed since the second dose of Moderna and Pfizer, or after the single does of Johnson & Johnson/Janssen vaccine) may return to work on Day 6 after testing positive for COVID-19 under the following conditions:

- A teacher/school-based staff member must be asymptomatic OR have mild symptoms only, such as
  - Being fever-free for 72 hours without the use of medication;
  - Not having a runny nose; and/or
  - Having a minimal cough only and cannot be coughing up phlegm.

At work, from Day 6 through Day 10, the positive teacher/school-based staff member must consistently and correctly wear a well-fitting higher level face covering, such as a KN95 mask.

Staff working under this policy must continue to stay at home, take precautions to avoid household transmission, and observe other required elements of isolation while not at work until the end of the 10-day period.

Additionally, anyone who received a was vaccinated against COVID-19 or received a booster shot within the past three days may return to school as long as the individual has been fever free for 24 hours without the use of medication.

### **Students and Staff Identified as Close Contacts in a COVID-19 Case**

Principals should continue to report all positive cases to the Situation Room. This now includes positive results from at-home rapid test kits that are reported to them.

Beginning immediately, if there is a positive case in a classroom, schools should follow this protocol:

- Students and staff members who were in close contact with a positive case, but who are not symptomatic, should not automatically quarantine.
- Schools should immediately distribute an at-home rapid test kit to each student and staff member who was in the classroom(s) with the individual who tested positive.
- These individuals should use the at-home rapid test kit to test themselves two times within five days. It is recommended that exposed individuals take one test on the day it is received and one test on Day Five after

exposure. If an exposed individual starts experiencing COVID symptoms before Day Five, they should use the second test.

- As always, people who are experiencing COVID symptoms should stay home.
- As a reminder, all students, staff and visitors must pass the health screener in order to enter a school building. The health screener will include questions about test results from these rapid tests for those students and staff who receive at home rapid test kits due to possible exposure in a classroom. No other proof of negative result is required.

## **COVID Response Situation Room**

The NYCDOE, T2, DOHMH, and Department of Buildings have collaborated to create the [COVID Response Situation Room](#) (the Situation Room).

Principals (or their designees) should continue to contact the Situation Room to report positive cases to 212-393-2780 or [RTS@buildings.nyc.gov](mailto:RTS@buildings.nyc.gov).

The Situation Room will continue to:

- Answer questions from school leaders
- Support with school communications and letters to families
- Monitor for widespread transmission and provide guidance on large scale interventions like school closures
- Update summary data and track citywide statistics
- Please visit the [Situation Room InfoHub](#) page for more information.

## **Nurses**

In the event that your school building does not have a nurse on January 3, 2022 or in the future, you should reference the following guidance:

- The principal should escalate this issue to the [nurse supervisor](#).(Open external link)
- The principal should inform the superintendent.

### **If there is a student who requires medicine:**

- The principal should reach out to guardians of students requiring medications/treatment and inform them that the school has no nurse coverage for the day.
- Guardians of students requiring medication/treatment may decide how to proceed in absence of a nurse and an option could include the guardian coming into school to give medication.
- Trained unlicensed staff may administer emergency medication (such as epinephrine and glucagon) consistent with students' medication administration forms, 504 plans, and as allowable by law.
- The school should designate someone at the school to provide non-emergency first aid. The BRT should be informed and assist. The school must call 911 in the case of an emergency.

### **If there is a student showing COVID-like symptoms:**

- The student showing symptoms of COVID-19 will be escorted to the designated area in the school by a staff member wearing appropriate PPE.
- The school must contact the guardian for pick up.
- The area/classroom where the student was showing symptoms must be isolated/closed immediately and cleaned prior to re-occupancy.
- Upon arrival of the student's guardian, a staff member escorts the student to the visitors' entrance for pick-up by the guardian.
  - The staff member reviews the NYCDOE's "Sent Home With Symptoms" letter with the guardian,
  - Gives the guardian a home test kit.
- The staff member will report the incident to the principal.
- The principal or designee will ensure that the incident involving the ill student is reported to the Situation Room by calling 212-393-2780 and is documented in OORS.
- The Situation Room will handle next steps and provide communication.

## **School Year 2021-22**

Return to the [School Year 2021 Landing](#) page.