



Lake County
General Health District
Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

December 27, 2021

To: Lake & Geauga County Superintendents

Re: Quarantine & Isolation in Schools

We are continuing to monitor the COVID-19 Pandemic and the various strains that are emerging and the evolving recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) as we better understand these viruses.

While no single action (including masking) will eliminate the risk of transmission of the virus within a school or school district, implementation of several coordinated interventions will significantly reduce that risk.

Schools Boards are now charged with the responsibility of managing close contacts and covid 19 exposures while balancing student safety and in-class learning. As a result, it's recognized that while not ideal; school boards are opting to modify their plans in regard to masking and therefore, it is suggested that schools, not experiencing an active outbreak, are encouraged to use the strategies described for prevention.

The ultimate goal is for our students and teachers to stay in an in-person education environment and minimize the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Recent data from our counties demonstrate that the rate of infection in quarantined students among Lake & Geauga County classrooms is lower than 5%. The process in Exhibit 1, see below, should be considered by your district if your Board of Education is seeking to reduce the number of quarantined students.

In the event of an outbreak, we will work with the local school district to determine the most appropriate action at that time. It will be based in part on the number of cases and the degree of potential spread given other prevention measures in place.

EXHIBIT 1

The following guidelines have been created in regard to COVID-19 exposures and infections due to the virus's following characteristics that we have learned thus far:

1. This is an infection that is primarily spread by respiratory droplets.
2. Not everyone infected with the virus will have symptoms.
3. A person infected with COVID-19 is spreading the virus 2 -3 days before symptoms start.
4. Most people start with symptoms approximately 3 - 5 days after exposure, but it can be up to 14 days.
5. Having a COVID-19 infection depends on the amount of COVID-19 viral particles a person inhale. ***One of the reason omicron variant is so contagious is because there are more viral particles in a person's respiratory droplets than in previous variants.***
6. A person with a COVID-19 infection is spreading viral particles for an average of 10



days from the start of symptoms. However, if they continue to have symptoms at the 10-day mark, they are considered contagious until they have not had a fever for at least 24 hours without fever-reducing medication, and their condition is improving.

7. If a person has been vaccinated, they are less likely to become severely ill and need to be hospitalized.
8. Current data shows vaccinated and unvaccinated people are spreading the virus if infected with the omicron variant. Future variants could pose similar and/or additional problems.

DEFINITIONS:

Symptomatic:

Typical COVID-19 symptoms include but are not limited to, new onset cough with or without shortness of breath, nasal congestion or runny nose, sore throat, body aches and chills, fever over 100.4 F, vomiting/diarrhea.

Close contact in the school setting:

Having been closer than 6 feet, for at least 10 minutes total time within a 24-hour period.

Recommendations to Quarantine/Isolate

Isolation Protocol (Symptomatic or a positive test)

If a student is experiencing symptoms that could be due to a COVID-19 infection, the student should stay home from school and seek medical attention for possible COVID-19 testing and directions for care.

If a student has tested positive for COVID-19 and **is** having symptoms, they should stay isolated from others for 5 days following **onset of symptoms**. After the 5th day, if the student is symptom free and/or improving, the student could return to school and normal activities as long as they continue to wear a mask around others for an additional 5 days.

If a student has **no** symptoms but has tested positive for COVID-19, they should isolate themselves from others for 5 days from the **date of the positive test**. After the 5th day, the student could return to school and normal activities as long as they continue to wear a mask around others for an additional 5 days.

If a student, who is asymptomatic AND has not been a close contact, tests positive with an at-home rapid test that does not come with a tele-health visit, we recommend reaching out to your doctor or other test providers to get an additional test prior to returning to school.



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Quarantine Protocol (Exposure)

If a student is notified that they have been in close contact with a person who tested positive for COVID-19 virus, they can continue to attend school if they are closely monitoring for symptoms and convert to isolation protocol if they start to experience any symptoms and ***are vigilant about mask wearing for the 10 days following exposure.***

If the student or parent feels the mask wearing cannot be done reliably, then they should remain at home.

Lake County General Health District, Geauga Public Health, and your local School Districts rely on both parents and students taking personal responsibility for disclosing illness, quarantining/isolation as necessary, and notifying appropriate persons regarding symptoms that might arise.

We strongly encourage everyone who is eligible and for whom it is not medically contraindicated to get vaccinated at their earliest opportunity.

We encourage interested parties to reach out to us for professional public health guidance that is based on the best evidence at the time.

****Should your local school district experience a significant outbreak it is recommended that you work with your local Health Department to address the spread of COVID-19 in your school.***

These are recommendations and schools should consult with their own legal counsel.