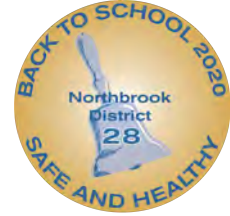


# Northbrook District 28

## Parent FAQ (8.28.20)



### Exclusion and Quarantining of Individuals/Close Contact/School Closure

Our first priority is the health of our students, staff, and families. Exclusion from school, including required quarantining, is a vital step to curb the impact and limit the spread of COVID-19. If any of us are excluded from school, even if we're feeling fine, let's acknowledge our frustration but then accept this necessary step as part of schooling in the midst of a pandemic.

The following information is from the Illinois Department of Public Health document: *Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) for Schools Additional Guidance as of August 20, 2020*. This information is subject to change at any time based on updated guidance from the Illinois Department of Public Health.

### Management of Ill Students and Staff

#### 1. What actions should be taken by students/staff sent home with COVID-like symptoms?

A medical evaluation and testing are strongly recommended for all persons with COVID-like symptoms.

Students and staff **who are confirmed or probable cases of COVID-19** must complete at least 10 calendar days of isolation from the date of first symptom onset and be fever-free for 24 hours without use of fever-reducing medications and other symptoms have improved before returning to school. A 'Release from Isolation' letter issued by the Local Health Department is required to return to school.

**Students and staff returning to school after experiencing COVID-like symptoms but being diagnosed with a non-COVID illness must meet the criteria for returning to school for the illness with which they have been diagnosed.** At a minimum, the individual must be fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication and have had no diarrhea or vomiting in the previous 24 hours. Other diseases have specific criteria for when a student or staff member can return to school. Follow school

health policies and communicable disease guidance for those illnesses. A doctor's note documenting the alternative diagnosis or a negative COVID-19 test result should accompany a student or staff member returning to school after experiencing COVID-like symptoms. Schools and districts should assist families in locating free or reduced-cost medical clinics for assistance where needed.

**Students and staff with COVID-like symptoms who do not get tested for COVID-19 and who do not provide a healthcare provider's note documenting an alternative diagnosis** must complete at least 10 calendar days of isolation from the date of first symptom onset and be fever-free for 24 hours without use of fever-reducing medications and other symptoms have improved before returning to school. A note is required from the parent/guardian documenting that the ill student and/or household contacts are fever-free without fever-reducing medicine and symptoms have improved.

Medical evaluation and COVID-19 diagnostic testing is strongly recommended for all persons with COVID-like symptoms.

Additionally, from the Illinois Department of Public Health document *Public Health Interim Guidance for Pre-K-12 Schools and Day Care Programs for Addressing COVID-19 (8/17/2020)*:

The school will notify families, teachers, and support staff while maintaining confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ACA) and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, and will include information on symptom monitoring, what to do if symptoms develop, COVID-19 prevention strategies, and information on what the school is doing in response to the positive case.

**2. If a student is sent home sick with suspected COVID-19 symptoms (e.g., cough, fever, diarrhea, shortness of breath, etc.), must all their siblings/household members be sent home as well and quarantined for 14 calendar days?**

Yes, if one of the household members is being evaluated for COVID-19, the rest of the household must be quarantined until an alternative diagnosis is made or a negative test result is received. If the sick student becomes a confirmed case (i.e., tests positive for COVID-19) or a probable case (i.e., has COVID-like symptoms and is epidemiologically linked to known case), the Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH) conducting contact tracing will place household contacts, including siblings, in quarantine for 14 calendar days. The health department also will provide guidance on how to safely quarantine and isolate within the household

### **3. How many symptoms does a person need to have to be considered suspect COVID-19?**

Students and staff exhibiting one or more COVID-like symptoms should be immediately isolated, and evaluated. Schools should evaluate each student/staff member to determine if this symptom is new or if it is part of an existing condition for this student/staff member.

### **4. If there is a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19 within a school, what are the recommendations for school closure?**

Decisions for temporary closure of a school will be made by school leaders in consultation with the CCDPH during its investigation of a case or cluster of cases. If the CCDPH determines that there is a risk to the school community, the school may be closed temporarily for cleaning and disinfection. This initial short-term dismissal allows time for the local health officials to gain a better understanding of the COVID-19 situation impacting the school. This also allows the local health officials to help the school determine appropriate next steps, including whether an extended dismissal duration is needed to stop or slow further spread of COVID-19.

## **Contacts to Cases**

### **5. What is contact tracing?**

Contact tracing is used by health departments to prevent the spread of infectious diseases. In general, contact tracing involves identifying people who have a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19 and people with whom they came in close contact and working with them to interrupt disease spread. This includes asking people with COVID-19 to isolate and their contacts to quarantine at home voluntarily.

### **6. Who is a close contact?**

A close contact is anyone (with or without a face covering) who was within 6 feet of a confirmed case of COVID-19 (with or without a face covering), for at least 15 minutes throughout the course of a day. The period of close contact begins 2 calendar days before the onset of symptoms (for a symptomatic person) or 2 calendar days before the positive sample was obtained (for an asymptomatic person). If the case was symptomatic (e.g., coughing, sneezing), persons with briefer periods of exposure may also be considered contacts. Close contacts to a confirmed case of COVID-19 are

required to remain in quarantine at home for 14 calendar days starting from the last day of contact with the confirmed case.

### **7. Who will do contact tracing?**

Contact tracing will be performed by the CCDPH, sometimes in partnership with DPH or a community-based organization. However, schools can assist the CCDPH by identifying all close contacts with a confirmed case while at school. Documentation of assigned seats and taking photos of assembled classes can be useful in helping schools determine who was within 6 feet of a given case. Schools must be aware of records and confidentiality laws pertaining to school student records, including exceptions for release of information in the event of an emergency and requirements to notify parents and create a record of emergency releases of information. (105 ILCS 10/6(a)(7); 23 Il. Admin. Code 375.60).

### **8. Is contact tracing only performed when a positive test is received?**

Contact tracing is performed for a confirmed case (laboratory confirmed positive) or a probable case (person with clinically compatible COVID-like symptoms and epidemiologically linked (known exposure) to a confirmed case or testing positive by an antigen test).

### **9. If a confirmed or probable COVID-19 case is identified in a classroom, or on a school bus, who will be considered close contacts that need to be quarantined for 14 calendar days? Will this include the entire classroom or all the students on the bus?**

Exposure in a classroom should be limited to everyone with whom the confirmed or probable COVID case had close contact, within 6 feet, for at least 15 minutes throughout the course of a day. Exposure on a bus must include everyone who sat within 6 feet of the confirmed or probable COVID case for 15 minutes or longer. A possible approach to identifying close contacts on a bus would be to include persons who sat 3 rows in front and 3 rows behind the confirmed or probable COVID case.

### **10. If the close contact and the COVID case were both wearing their cloth face coverings when the exposure occurred, is the close contact still required to be quarantined?**

Yes. While there is strong evidence that face coverings significantly reduce the risk of infection, the likelihood for transmission cannot be ruled out.

### **11. Is a physician's note required to return to school after a 'close contact' to a case completes 14 calendar days in quarantine?**

Persons who remain asymptomatic throughout 14 calendar days of quarantine do not need a physician's note to return to school. During the quarantine period, a contact tracer will be closely monitoring the contact to confirm they remain asymptomatic. A "Release from Quarantine" letter issued by the Local Health Department and provided to the parent/guardian or individual is required to return to school.

#### **12. What is the definition of an outbreak in schools?**

Two confirmed cases of COVID-19 infections occurring within 14 calendar days of each other in individuals in the same classroom would meet the case definition for an outbreak. This is because the cases would be epidemiologically linked (known exposure to) with respect to place (same classroom) and time (within 14 calendar days). This would prompt an investigation by the LHD that may result in recommendations for testing and quarantining all students/staff in the affected classroom.

## School Closure

#### **13. If there is a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19 within a school, what are the recommendations for school closure?**

Decisions for temporary closure of a school will be made by school leaders in consultation with the CCDPH during its investigation of a case or cluster of cases. If the CCDPH determines that there is a risk to the school community, the school may be closed temporarily for cleaning and disinfection. This initial short-term dismissal allows time for the local health officials to gain a better understanding of the COVID-19 situation impacting the school. This also allows the local health officials to help the school determine appropriate next steps, including whether an extended dismissal duration is needed to stop or slow further spread of COVID-19.