



# Hamden Public Schools Communicable Respiratory Disease Guidance 2023-2024

**The Promise, Pride and Power of Learning**

## **Health and Safety Strategies Introduction**

During the 2023–2024 school year, we are expecting the circulation of several viral respiratory diseases, including COVID-19, influenza, and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). The purpose of this plan is to provide an update to the framework that has guided our practices and expectations for all students and staff as we address these communicable respiratory diseases. We will continue to learn, grow and adapt as needed to adjust to the complexities of new safety and health guidance as it becomes available from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#), State Department of Education (CSDE), State Department of Public Health (DPH), and the Quinnipiack Valley Health District (QVHD). As such, this document may change as new guidance is provided to schools, and therefore should not be considered an exhaustive list of expectations and protocols.

Hamden Public Schools chartered a Medical Subcommittee of our School Reopening Committee in July, 2020 composed of medical advisors and district leadership. Since that time, this committee has met nearly weekly and has allowed for a vigorous discussion and continuous updating of health and safety strategies, protocols, and practices in order to provide the best possible guidance to the district.

## **Vaccination**

In partnership with the Cornell Scott-Hill Health Center (CS-HHC) and QVHD, vaccination clinics have been and will be held if necessary to offer vaccinations for influenza, COVID-19, and RSV as recommended. Hamden Public Schools will also continue to advise families and staff as to the availability of vaccination clinics in our community in accordance with guidance offered by the CDC (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/stay-up-to-date.html#print>) and the CT DPH

## **Daily Health Assessment**

All members of our Hamden Public Schools community will review the Daily Health Assessment every day as applicable to themselves or their children. This Daily Health Assessment is a very important first line of defense in ensuring the health and wellness of our students while also protecting our entire school community from the risk of infection. Families should contact their child’s medical provider or their child’s school nurse for additional guidance.

[Hamden Health Assessment English 2023.jpg](#)

[Hamden Health Assessment Spanish 2023.jpg](#)

## Testing

Students and staff with mild respiratory disease symptoms (e.g., infrequent cough, congestion, runny nose, sore throat, etc.) have the option to continue participating in-person provided:

- they are fever-free (a temperature of less than 100° F) and feel well enough to participate
- they test negative for COVID-19 prior to reporting in-person on every day they have symptoms, as well as one final test in the morning their symptoms have completely resolved.

Individuals who have any respiratory disease symptoms must not come to school if:

- they have a fever (a temperature of 100° F or higher). They should not report in-person until their fever has resolved for at least 24 hours without the use of medication
- they have tested positive for COVID-19.

Individuals who test positive must isolate at home for 5 days. They may return if they are fever free and their symptoms have improved. (They should also reach out to their medical advisor for guidance). Upon return, they should consider masking for 5 days. They must also notify their administrator and the school nurse.

Hamden Public Schools encourages frequent testing for anyone:

- who feels unwell;
- has any symptoms associated with COVID-19;
- has had an exposure to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 (CDC guidelines recommend testing 24 hours after exposure, again on day 3 and day 5), or;
- has spent a significant amount of time in very close contact with groups of people, such as during holiday gatherings or recent travel.

## Infection Control Plan

### Identification and Monitoring

The School Submission portal for COVID-19 has been decommissioned and schools no longer need to report individual cases of COVID-19 among staff or students. Outbreaks of any kind (including COVID-19) continue to be immediately reportable as Category 1 conditions by telephone to DPH and QVHD. Guidelines for defining an outbreak may include three or more connected cases within a classroom or 10% of a group size per CT DPH guidance. Principals and nurses must coordinate with the Health Office and HPS Lead Nurse to account for other factors that may impact consideration of an outbreak designation (i.e classroom activities or proximity).

- The District will continue to host Health and Safety Subcommittee meetings weekly or as necessary to monitor COVID-19 [community data](#) and apply appropriate prevention and response strategies as detailed by the CT DPH, CSDE, and QVHD based on observed or anticipated conditions within our community and our schools.
- Staff members, parents, caregivers, or guardians are expected to monitor themselves and their children for symptoms of infectious illness every day through home-based symptom screening using the [Daily Health Assessment](#). (see also [Symptoms of COVID-19](#)).
- Health Offices with the assistance of school clerks may actively monitor staff and student absenteeism and track the reasons for their absences to identify any trends that would suggest spread of respiratory illness.
- Instruct students, families, and staff to inform the school nurse if they are sick with respiratory

disease symptoms, particularly if they had a known contact with someone diagnosed with a communicable respiratory disease.

### **Containment procedures for a student or staff member suspected of being ill with a communicable respiratory disease**

- Response practices for COVID-19 (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/isolation.html>).
  - Exposed persons who are well can attend school and work.
  - For individuals who test positive for COVID-19, CDC currently recommends isolation for 5 days, followed by 5 days of masking if:
    - Individuals are fever-free for 24 hours without use of fever reducing medication.
    - Other symptoms have started to improve.
- Response practices for other Viral Respiratory Diseases.
  - Individuals can attend school or work if they are fever-free for 24 hours without use of fever reducing medication.
  - Feeling well enough to be in school.
- The District will consult with its medical advisors around the signs and symptoms exhibited by students or staff that would require their immediate dismissal from school.
- Staff members who suspect they are ill with a communicable respiratory disease should contact the school nurse and may be directed to leave the school immediately. HPS staff must report a positive COVID-19 test to their school nurse and building administrator
- School staff must notify the school health office about any student they suspect may be ill with a communicable respiratory disease.
- At the direction of the school nurse, students may be requested to wear a mask until dismissed.
- School nurses will call the parent to determine a timeline for pick up. Parents will be advised of the need for the student to be assessed by a Pediatrician to determine if a COVID-19 test is required.
- Custodians will be directed to clean the Health Office as needed.
- The school nurse will track positive cases of COVID-19 and will monitor clusters within classes. If a cluster occurs, they will notify their building administrator and QVHD. Mitigation strategies will also be examined if there is a cluster of COVID-19 and additional mitigation strategies may need to be implemented.
- Procedures to guide the District in identifying and addressing staff members and other students who need to isolate will be continually reviewed by QVHD and the District Medical Advisor.
- Athletics:
  - The district will implement the guidance and timelines for isolation related to sports activities as outlined by the [CIAC](#).
  - DPH recommends that, when considering their own policies, schools keep in mind recommendations from the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#).

### **Health and Safety Liaisons**

The District Lead Nurse and each school nurse will serve as a Health and Safety Liaison responsible for engaging with students, parents, faculty, staff, and administrators to answer questions and share information about health and safety requirements. All school staff and families should know and have the contact information for the designee. The Lead Nurse has the authority to address compliance issues. The Health and Safety Liaisons and Principals will assist in establishing and reinforcing a culture of health, safety, and shared responsibility by:

- Providing training to teachers, staff, students, and parents/guardians prior to school opening, especially concerning frequent hand washing and use of hand sanitizer, respiratory and cough etiquette, and other topics that impact the general health of our school community.

- School staff will reinforce good health practices.
- Creating and displaying signs around the school as reminders of rules, roles, and responsibilities.
- Health and Safety Liaisons should continue to meet regularly to review best practices, share challenges, discuss staff and student training, and refine messaging to families, staff, and students.

## **Mask Protocols**

Pursuant to guidance received from the CT DPH, the Hamden Board of Education voted to transition to a mask-optional policy for Hamden Public Schools at its Tuesday, March 8, 2022 Board meeting. The Board's mask-optional policy is still in effect. As such, students, staff and visitors can either wear masks while in Hamden Public School facilities, or can choose not to wear masks while in Hamden Public School facilities.

- Hamden Public Schools supports and respects the decisions of staff, students, families, and visitors who choose to use masks during the school day or at school functions.
- Discrimination or harassment of anyone who chooses to wear or to not wear a mask will not be tolerated.
- Parents must communicate to their child their expectations for mask wearing.
- Parents may supply face masks for their children, and adults can choose to supply their own face masks. HPS will provide masks for any student or staff member who does not have one and wishes to wear one.
- Masking protocols may change throughout the school year in response to changes in public health data or guidance from governmental agencies (i.e. CT DPH).
- Students must remove masks as requested by school staff for identification purposes at any time.
- Masks must comply with the Student Dress Code. Student masks may not:
  - Advertise or display symbols of drugs, tobacco products or alcoholic beverages.
  - Be considered racially insensitive or display or imply profane or obscene language or symbols.
  - Include emblems, insignias, badges, tattoos, gang-related or other symbols where the effect thereof is to unreasonably attract the attention of other students or cause disruption or interference with the operation of the school.
- The school nurse will monitor the incidence of communicable illnesses in the school and may suggest that staff wear masks. The nurse may also determine that masks are required for anyone who visits the health office.

## **Distancing**

- Students may engage in group work, table work, or classroom arrangements without minimum distancing, unless directed otherwise by QVHD or any other mandate issued by a regulatory agency.
- Student activities, assemblies, and other gatherings will not have physical distancing requirements unless directed by QVHD or other governmental agency mandates.

## **Handwashing and Respiratory Etiquette**

- The Facilities Department has installed signage in buildings to ensure messages related to stopping the spread are accessible for students with disabilities and in languages appropriate

for the school population.

- Frequent handwashing and/or hand-sanitizing will be encouraged through signage ([example here](#)) and age-appropriate lessons for students. Students should always be encouraged to wash hands before eating and after recess.
- Classrooms will have access to washing stations and, if necessary, plan for temporary washing stations or hand sanitizer dispensers.
- Sanitizing stations will be placed to facilitate access by anyone entering the building and filled promptly when empty.
- Respiratory etiquette, emphasizing covering the mouth and nose when sneezing or coughing, using and immediately disposing of tissues, and washing hands, will be encouraged with signage and reminders.
- No-Touch Usage
  - The Facilities Department will assist staff in propping doors where appropriate and in accordance with Fire Code such as restrooms and hallways.
  - Trash cans will be located near doors and will not have lids.
  - Restrooms will have trash cans located near the exit where possible; cans will not have lids.

## Cleaning Protocols

- Contaminated surfaces are not a significant risk for transmission of SARS-CoV-2. Routine daily cleaning is all that is needed in most areas of school buildings (<https://www.cdc.gov/hygiene/cleaning/facility.html>).
- Prioritize disinfection to bathrooms, health offices/isolation space, and known exposure areas.
- Training Related to Facilities
  - All Facilities staff will be trained and kept up to date on all cleaning and operation protocols.
  - Equipment training for all new equipment will take place to ensure its proper use.
  - Building custodial staff will advise other school staff on best practices.

## Ventilation

- The Facilities Department complies with [Guidance for School Systems for the Operation of Central and non- Central Ventilation Systems](#) during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Building systems will be inspected during the summer by the Facilities Department and prior to opening to ensure they are operating properly.
- The Facilities Department will replace air filters prior to the start of the year and upgrade to higher effective filters when necessary.
- Filters are changed regularly.
- Where possible, opening windows will be encouraged. Consider, however, how to avoid circumstances where opening a window may pose a health threat, such as asthma or allergy symptoms or creating fall risks for young students.
- The Facilities Department will reprogram building HVAC controls systems to maximize and increase ventilation rates as well as increase the percentage of outdoor air that circulates into the system where possible.
- General building and restroom exhaust fans will be set to run 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.
- The Facilities Department will work with Cenegistics and a certified Test and Balance contractor to audit performance and assist troubleshooting of ventilation systems found not performing adequately.
- DPH continues to recommend that school ventilation practices follow guidance from the American

Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers pertaining to school buildings. These guidelines include recommendations for fresh air supplied to indoor spaces, filtration of recirculated air, as well as maintenance and monitoring considerations.

- **Health Office Ventilation:** if a health office does not have a window, confer with the Facilities Department on ventilation needs.

## Health Office Guidelines

- Nurses will monitor with building custodians the availability of adequate supplies, including soap, hand sanitizer with at least 60% ethyl alcohol or 70% isopropyl alcohol (for staff and older students who can safely use hand sanitizer), paper towels, tissues, disinfectant wipes, face coverings (as feasible), and no-touch/foot-pedal trash cans.
- Staff must call the health office (or main office if unable to reach the health office) before sending a student. Staff may also use radios if needed but be mindful of privacy.
- If possible, Nurses will go to the classroom to assess a student for minor problems.
- Teachers will be provided with a classroom first aid kit and a Health Office Decision Tree for minor problems where a child may administer self-care.
- Use of Nebulizers
  - CDC still recommends limiting use of nebulizers. If use cannot be avoided, specific recommendations to ensure the safety of others are to be followed ([Infection Control: Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 \(SARS-CoV-2\) | CDC](#)).
  - Evidence demonstrates that properly using an inhaler with a spacer, practicing good technique and giving an appropriate dose, is at least as effective as using a nebulizer. It is recommended that schools work with primary care providers and parents to prioritize use of this delivery method for inhaled medications.

# Prevent Respiratory Viruses

## *STAY HEALTHY ALL SEASON*



**Wash Your Hands Often**

**Clean & Disinfect  
Surfaces Regularly**



**Get Your Flu Vaccine  
& COVID-19 Booster**

**Stay Home When  
You Are Sick**



**Mask Around Others  
When Symptomatic**