

# Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (LAC DPH) Guidelines COVID-19 Exposure Management Plan for TK-12 Schools

Note: This document is updated frequently.  
Please check the date on the webpage for the most recent version.

Recent Updates: (Changes highlighted in yellow)

**3/31/2023:**

- Notification of student close contacts has changed to a strong recommendation.
- Clarifies that staff and students who are infected with COVID-19 must stay home and cannot return to school until the criteria to end isolation have been met.

**3/14/2023:**

- This update aligns with the new California Department of Public Health (CDPH) [Guidance for Local Health Jurisdictions on Isolation and Quarantine of the General Public](#) that took effect on March 13, 2023.
- Updates also reflect the new [Los Angeles County Department of Public Health Guidelines for COVID-19 Cases \(Isolation\) and Close Contacts](#) that went into effect on March 13, 2023, replacing the now rescinded Los Angeles County Public Health Emergency Orders regarding isolation and quarantine for the general public.

A targeted public health response to contain COVID-19 exposures at a community-level can help maximize the impact of the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health's (DPH) COVID-19 response.

Primary and Secondary Schools serving students from Transitional Kindergarten through Grade 12 (TK-12 Schools) are trusted community partners that can help DPH improve the timeliness and impact of the Public Health response through rapid initiation of a COVID-19 Exposure Management Plan (EMP). Immediate implementation of an EMP when a single case of COVID-19 is identified at a school can accelerate the ability to contain the spread of infection and prevent outbreaks from occurring.

The steps for managing exposures to COVID-19 cases at TK-12 Schools are described below. The guidance presented is specific to TK-12 instructional and non-instructional facilities serving TK-12 Schools. For the purposes of this plan, the word "School" applies to both TK-12 instructional and non-instructional facilities. Additional resources for TK-12 Schools are located in the [TK-12 School COVID-19 Toolkit](#).

## Exposure Management Planning Prior to Identifying COVID-19 Cases at School

- X Required:* A designated School COVID-19 Compliance Officer who is responsible for serving as a liaison to DPH for sharing site-level information to facilitate public health action.
- X Required:* Ensure compliance with applicable State COVID-19 testing plan requirements,



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e.g., [SB-1479](#) and the [Cal/OSHA COVID-19 Prevention Non-Emergency Regulations](#).

- ☒ *Required:* A plan to report all school-associated clusters of 3 or more epidemiologically linked COVID-19 cases within 1 business day of being notified of the third, or last, case in the cluster and all known COVID-19 hospitalizations and/or deaths among students or staff to DPH by sending a notification to [ACDC-Education@ph.lacounty.gov](mailto:ACDC-Education@ph.lacounty.gov).

## Exposure Management for COVID-19 Cases at School

- ☒ Students and staff with confirmed COVID-19 infection (cases) **must** stay home and away from others (isolate) and follow all isolation instructions, regardless of their vaccination status, history of previous infection, or lack of symptoms. (Refer to Isolation Instructions for People with COVID-19 [ph.lacounty.gov/covidisolation](http://ph.lacounty.gov/covidisolation).) Please note that current state law and regulations require staff and students who have a communicable disease infection to stay home from school while contagious.<sup>1</sup>
  - A confirmed COVID-19 case is a person who has received a positive result of the presence of SARS-CoV-2 virus as confirmed by a COVID-19 viral test or clinical diagnosis.
- ☒ Persons with symptoms of possible COVID-19 infection, regardless of vaccination status or previous infection, should isolate and test for COVID-19. Refer to DPH's [Learn about Symptoms and What to do if You are Sick](#).
- ☒ Students and staff with COVID-19 may end isolation after Day 5\* (i.e., between Day 6-10) if both of the following criteria are met\*\*:

- 1) No fever for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medicine, AND
- 2) Other symptoms are not present, or symptoms are mild and improving.

\*For symptomatic students and staff, Day 0 is the first day of symptoms; Day 1 is the first full day after symptoms develop. For students and staff who never develop symptoms, Day 0 is the day the first positive test was collected; Day 1 is the first full day after the positive test was collected. Please note that if they develop symptoms, their new Day 0 is the first day of symptoms.

\*\*It is **strongly recommended** that an individual test negative (with an antigen test) for COVID-19 prior to ending isolation between Day 6-10 to reduce the chance of infecting others with COVID-19.

<sup>1</sup> See, Title 17 California Code of Regulations, section 2526: "It shall be the duty of the principal or other person in charge of any public, private or Sunday School to exclude therefrom any child or other person affected with a disease presumably communicable, until the expiration of the prescribed period of isolation for the particular communicable disease. If the attending physician, school physician, or health officer finds upon examination that the person is not suffering from a communicable disease, he may submit a certificate to this effect to the school authority who shall readmit the person." Title 5 California Code of Regulations, section 202: "A pupil while infected with any contagious or infectious disease may not remain in any public school." California Health and Safety Code, section 120230: "No instructor, teacher, pupil, or child who resides where any contagious, infectious, or communicable disease exists or has recently existed, that is subject to strict isolation or quarantine of contacts, shall be permitted by any superintendent, principal, or teacher of any college, seminary, or public or private school to attend the college, seminary, or school, except by the written permission of the health officer."



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- Persons who continue to have symptoms of COVID-19 that are not improving should continue to isolate until their symptoms are improving or until after Day 10.
- Persons who have left isolation and have a return or worsening of their COVID-19 symptoms need to re-test (with an antigen test). If they test positive, they should re-start isolation at Day 0.
- If a student meets the criteria to leave isolation after Day 5, the student should continue to wear a well-fitting mask indoors around others, except when eating or drinking, through Day 10, unless they have two sequential negative COVID-19 tests taken at least one day apart.
- For staff requirements related to isolation, refer to [Cal/OSHA COVID-19 Prevention Non-Emergency Regulations](#). Employers must review and follow these regulations for the prevention and control of COVID-19 in the workplace setting. Additional information may be found in the Cal/OSHA [COVID-19 Prevention Non-Emergency Regulations FAQs](#) and DPH's [Responding to COVID-19 in the Workplace](#).
- It is strongly recommended that parents continue to immediately inform schools when a student tests positive for COVID-19 and was present on site during the student's infectious period.\*

\*The infectious period is:

- *For symptomatic confirmed cases:* Persons who have tested positive on a COVID-19 viral test or received a clinical diagnosis of COVID-19 (i.e., a confirmed case) are considered infectious starting 2 days before their symptoms began (symptom onset is Day 0) until their isolation ends (i.e., through Days 6-10 after symptoms first appeared AND 24 hours have passed with no fever, without the use of fever-reducing medicines, and symptoms have improved).
- *For asymptomatic confirmed cases:* Persons who have tested positive on a COVID-19 viral test and never develop symptoms are infectious starting 2 days before their test was taken (test collection day is Day 0) until their isolation ends (after Day 5).

- ☐ X When schools are notified of a confirmed COVID-19 case, it is strongly recommended that they notify students who were exposed to the COVID-19 case during the case's infectious period and provide them with the actions to take for close contacts. Schools are required to notify employees if they have been exposed to a known case of COVID-19 in the workplace during the case's infectious period, as per [Cal/OSHA COVID-19 Prevention Non-Emergency Regulations](#).

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- Close Contacts: Persons are considered to have been exposed to a COVID-19 case (close contact) during the case's infectious period if:

In indoor airspaces that are 400,000 cubic feet or less per floor. They shared the same indoor airspace at school with the infected person (case) for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period during an infected person's infectious period.

In indoor airspaces that are greater than 400,000 cubic feet per floor. They were within 6 feet of the infected person (case) for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period during the infected person's infectious period. NOTE: Spaces that are separated by floor-to-ceiling walls (e.g., offices, suites, break/eating areas separated by floor-to-ceiling walls) are considered distinct indoor airspaces.

NOTE: Persons with an outdoor exposure at school are not considered close contacts.

- ❑ X Close contacts to a COVID-19 case should take the following actions:

- Close contacts who have or develop symptoms of COVID-19 infection, regardless of vaccination status or previous infection, **must** stay home away from others and test for COVID-19.
- Asymptomatic close contacts do not need to stay home away from others but should take the following actions to lower the risk of spreading COVID-19 to others:

- 1) Wear a well-fitting mask around others through Day 10, especially in indoor settings.
  - Students who have a mask exemption\* and have been exposed should wear a face shield with drape at the bottom if their condition allows. For students who cannot tolerate a mask or a face shield with drape at the bottom, they should monitor their health for symptoms for 10 days after last exposure AND test for COVID-19 immediately after exposure and **a** second time between Days 3-5 after the last date of exposure, with at least **24 hours** between the first and second tests.
- 2) Test for COVID-19 between Days 3-5 after the last date of exposure.
  - Close contacts who recently tested positive for COVID-19 within the prior 30 days do not need to be tested unless symptoms develop.
  - Close contacts who recently tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 31-90 days should use an antigen test.
  - Close contacts who are or live with persons at [higher risk for severe illness](#) are recommended to test as soon as possible after exposure. If testing negative before Day 3, retest during the 3–5 day window following exposure, with at least 24 hours between the first and second tests.
  - Close contacts who test positive for COVID-19 stay home away from others and

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follow the instructions for a confirmed COVID-19 case **outlined above**. Refer to DPH's [Guidelines for COVID-19 Cases \(Isolation\) and Close Contacts](#).

- 3) Monitor their health for symptoms for 10 days after the last date of exposure. If symptoms develop, stay away from others and test immediately. If the test is positive, they **must** stay home away from others and follow the instructions for a confirmed COVID-19 case.

Refer to Instructions for Close Contacts for COVID-19 ([ph.lacounty.gov/covidcontacts](http://ph.lacounty.gov/covidcontacts)) for details.

\*Individuals may be exempt from wearing a mask for the following reasons (refer to COVID-19 Guidelines for TK-12 Schools for additional information): 1) persons younger than two years old; 2) persons who are hearing impaired, or communicating with a person who is hearing impaired, where the ability to see the mouth is essential for communication; and 3) persons with a medical condition, mental health condition, or disability or whose medical provider has determined that it is unsafe for them to wear a mask, may file for an exemption with their school. A certification from a state licensed health care provider attesting that the student has a condition or disability that precludes them from wearing a mask safely can be accepted as proof of exemption. The following licensed health care professionals may provide such attestations: Medical providers including physician (MD or DO), nurse practitioner (NP), or physician assistant (PA) practicing under the authority of a licensed physician; and licensed mental and behavioral health practitioners including Clinical Social Worker (LCSW), clinical psychologist (Psy.D. or Ph.D.), Professional Clinical Counselor (LPCC), or Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT).

- Staff who are close contacts exposed at work must follow the guidance outlined in [Cal/OSHA COVID-19 Prevention Non-Emergency Regulations](#). See also DPH's [Responding to COVID-19 in the Workplace](#).
  - Staff may request masks and respirators from their employer at no cost to staff. See [Wear a Mask and Know your Rights](#) for more information.
  - Employers must make COVID-19 testing available at no cost and during paid time in a manner that ensures employee confidentiality to staff who are close contacts. See [Cal/OSHA COVID-19 Prevention Non-Emergency Regulations Frequently Asked Questions-Testing](#).

☐ The School Compliance Officer must notify Public Health of all clusters of 3 or more cases of COVID-19 in a classroom, office, or other pre-defined or identifiable group (i.e., cohort, team/club, etc.) who were linked and on campus at any point within the 14 days prior to illness onset date (school-associated cases). Cases include employees, children/students, and visitors with confirmed COVID-19.

- All school-associated COVID-19 clusters should be reported online through the secure web application, the Shared Portal for Outbreak Tracking (SPOT):



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[https://spot.cdph.ca.gov/s/?language=en\\_US](https://spot.cdph.ca.gov/s/?language=en_US). For reporting multiple cases, schools can submit their reports using the “Bulk Upload Template” located within the SPOT Portal.

- All clusters with information for the cases should be reported to Public Health immediately, and no later than 1 business day of being notified of the third, or last, case in the cluster.
  - Schools that need assistance on COVID-19 case reporting or other exposure management processes can call the TK-12 School COVID-19 Case Reporting Call Center, Monday through Friday from 8:00AM to 5:00PM. School administrators that do not have the Call Center number should contact [ACDC-Education@ph.lacounty.gov](mailto:ACDC-Education@ph.lacounty.gov) for the number.
- X The School Compliance Officer will work with Public Health as needed to confirm whether the cases within the reported cluster are epidemiologically linked, meaning that the affected individuals were present at some point in the same setting during the same time period while either or both were infectious.
- If epidemiological links exist, DPH will advise the school on important steps to take and communications to students and employees on precautions to take to prevent further spread at the school, including implementation of site- specific interventions for infection control. Schools **can** contact DPH for assistance in determining whether cases are epidemiologically linked by emailing [ACDC-Education@ph.lacounty.gov](mailto:ACDC-Education@ph.lacounty.gov) or by calling the TK-12 School COVID-19 Case Reporting Call Center.
  - Public Health will determine if the outbreak criteria have been met: at least 3 confirmed cases of COVID-19 within a 14-day period of each other in a specified group\* with members who are epidemiologically linked, do not share a household, and are not a close contact of each other outside of the campus.
    - If outbreak criteria are not met, DPH will advise the school to continue with routine exposure management.
    - If outbreak criteria are met and DPH recommends an outbreak response, DPH will notify the school that an outbreak investigation has been activated and a Public Health **Outbreak** Investigator will communicate directly with the school to coordinate the response.
- NOTE: In outbreak settings, the Public Health Outbreak Investigator may implement temporary strategies that are more protective than these guidelines to prevent further spread of COVID-19 at the site.**
- \*Specified group include persons that share a common membership at school (e.g., classroom, school event, sport teams, other school extracurricular activities, school transportation, office site). Epidemiological links require the infected persons to have been present at some point in the same setting during the same time period while infectious.

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 • • • • **for TK-12 Schools**

NOTE: For overnight camps, a “household cohort” means cabinmates (campers and staff) who are staying together in a cabin, bunkhouse, or similar space. Confirmed cases that are part of the same household cohort are not counted separately toward meeting outbreak criteria.

**APPENDIX A: Steps for Managing Exposures to COVID-19 Cases at School**

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| 1-2<br>Cases | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) <b>Required:</b> School notifies cases to follow isolation instructions. Cases may return when the criteria for ending isolation have been met.</li> <li>2) <b>Recommended:</b> School notifies school close contacts of exposures and actions to take.</li> </ol>   |
| 3+<br>Cases  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) <b>Required:</b> School notifies cases to follow isolation instructions. Cases may return when the criteria for ending isolation have been met.</li> <li>2) <b>Recommended:</b> School notifies school close contacts of exposures and actions to take.</li> <li>3) <b>Required:</b> If there is a cluster of 3 or more cases in a classroom, office, or in a pre-defined group (i.e., cohort, team, or club, etc.) who were linked and on campus at any point within the 14 days prior to illness onset date, the school immediately notifies DPH by reporting online at: <a href="https://spot.cdph.ca.gov/s/?language=en_US">https://spot.cdph.ca.gov/s/?language=en_US</a> and no later than 1 business day of being notified of the third, or last, case in the cluster.</li> <li>4) DPH determines if the outbreak criteria have been met. If a DPH outbreak investigation is activated, a Public Health <b>Outbreak</b> Investigator will contact the school to coordinate the outbreak investigation.</li> </ol> |