

Guidance for Principals COVID-19

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Public Health Hotline 980-314-9400

What happens if someone tests positive for COVID-19?

Any positive test is reported to the health department in the county where the person lives. When someone tests positive, the health department will contact the person to ensure they are aware of their diagnosis, review home isolation requirements and assess their social service needs. Contact tracing will be conducted to identify anyone who was in close contact to the patient for up to 48 hours before they showed symptoms. Close contacts include household members and anyone who was within 6 feet of the patient for more than a total of 15 minutes during the time period they were infectious. The health department attempts to notify anyone who was identified as potentially exposed. For school-related exposures, the health department works directly with CMS to identify close contacts in the school and notify anyone who may have been exposed. Principals or supervisors often notify school contacts. The health department provides official written notification once a case is confirmed.

What should the principal do if a student reports receiving a positive COVID-19 test?

(Note: If the positive case is in an employee, see [Guidance for Supervisors for any additional steps](#))

- Notify the health department of reported case:
 - Contact School Nurse assigned to your school or Nurse Supervisor to submit case information
 - OR Email [COVID reporting template](#) to Communicable Diseases school team: covidschoolteam@mecklenburgcountync.gov
*NOTE: you will get a quicker response with email than trying to reach someone by phone (Pam Coffman, CD Nurse: **980-314-9662** or Brian Lackey, CD Nurse Supervisor: **980-314-9206**)
 - The health department will notify you when they confirm the positive case and will provide you with the official exposure notification for any close contacts.
- Ensure the student is not at school and any household members that work for or attend school at CMS are quarantined.
- Submit [DRT Form](#), this is an internal notification for CMS (used in metric reporting)
- The student must stay isolated until they are released by their physician and/or the health department's order.
- If the student is well enough to participate in school, provide resources needed for remote learning.
- Ensure necessary cleaning protocols are followed:
 - All buildings have enhanced cleaning/disinfection protocols in place, including frequent routine cleaning of high-touch areas.

- If an individual was in a CMS facility within two days of symptoms developing, a specialized disinfecting cleaning process will be performed, focusing on areas of the building in which the individual spent significant time.

Principals should identify:

- When did the student get tested?
- When was the last day the student was at school?
- When did any symptoms start?
- Determine if the student was in the school within two days of the start of symptoms (if no symptoms, use the date of the test).
- Contact tracing is only necessary if the student was present within 2 days of symptoms starting or within 2 days of testing, if no symptoms.
 - Identify anyone who was within 6 feet of the student for more than a total of 15 minutes within 48 hours of symptoms developing. This can be determined by:
 - Asking the positive individual or their teachers
 - Looking at class schedules and reviewing seating charts
 - Considering other activities or special events
 - Reviewing list of visitors and subs to provide notification
 - considering transportation, review bus seating charts or video
 - Anyone who is identified as a close contact must leave the building and begin quarantining as soon as possible.
 - Call families to make them aware of the need to quarantine

Notification/Communication Guidelines

- Any notifications must maintain confidentiality in accordance with state and federal laws. Official Mecklenburg County Public Health (MCPH) notifications must be approved by MCPH.
- School principals may send out an initial communication through CMS to notify staff and families prior to MCPH confirmation. The MCPH notification letter(s) will still be sent.
- Document all positive cases and students under quarantine order in the [isolation tracking form](#) to monitor return.
- If the student has been out of school for at least 14 days prior to symptoms or test (if asymptomatic), then no additional notification is required.
- If student was in the school within 14 days of symptoms developing or test, work with Mecklenburg County Public Health for initial guidance, which may include:
 - Close contacts receive an exposure letter instructing them to quarantine for 10 days after the date of exposure (14 days for any pre-k students or others who cannot adhere to precautions*). Close contacts may return after 7 days of quarantine, if they do not have any symptoms and receive a negative PCR test on or after 5 days from date of exposure.
 - School-wide students and staff receive a non-exposure communication (can provide a letter, email, or ConnectEd/Parent Square message) that someone tested positive and if you were in close contact and need to take further action, you would receive additional information and further communication.

*Strict precautions include: monitoring for symptoms and isolating if symptoms develop, wearing a face covering at all times in public and practicing social distancing.

When can a student return to school in-person after a positive COVID-19 test?

- The student must isolate until all three of the below items are true:
 - It has been at least 10 days since symptoms started, or 10 days since the test if no symptoms are experienced.
 - It has been at least 24 hours since the individual experienced any fever (with no fever-reducing medicine).
 - All symptoms are showing improvement.

What if Principals receive questions from staff/students/families concerned about the non-exposure notice

- Advise the individual to consult with their healthcare provider and/or access available testing from the [Mecklenburg County COVID-19 Testing Site Locator website](#). The decision to get tested is up to the individual.
- If additional questions, direct them to call the Public Health Hotline at 980-314-9400.
- Reassure them that those who were in close contact have been notified directly that they may have been exposed and instructed to self-quarantine.
- Staff or students who are **NOT** identified as close contacts do **NOT** need to self-quarantine, even if they were in the building at the same time. They should self-monitor for symptoms and stay home and seek evaluation if any symptoms develop.
- Based on privacy regulations, we are unable to provide any information about the individual who tested positive.
- Anyone who develops any symptoms should stay home until further evaluation.

What if a student develops COVID-19 symptoms?

Symptoms include: fever of 100.4 or higher, chills, new cough, shortness of breath, new loss of taste or smell.

- Student must leave school or not report to school.
- If the student has symptoms, they should be tested for COVID-19.
- Instruct them to consult with their healthcare provider and/or access available testing from the [Mecklenburg County COVID-19 Testing Site Locator website](#).
- They should remain out of school until they meet the criteria to return:
 - The student can return to school following normal illness policies and procedures, if they received confirmation of an alternative diagnosis that explains the COVID-19-like symptoms, once there is no fever without the use of fever reducing medicines and they have felt well for 24 hours.
 - If fever was the symptom and receive a negative COVID-19 test, can return to school once 24 hours fever free without medication.
 - If positive test or do not get a PCR test or alternative diagnosis, can return after 10 days since symptoms started, at least 24 hours without fever with no fever-reducing medicine and all symptoms improving.

What if someone has Post-vaccine symptoms/side effects?

- If someone experiences common symptoms from the vaccine: fever, fatigue, headache, chills, muscle or joint pain within 3 days of receiving the vaccine and they have not had a known exposure to someone then they should be excluded from work until the symptoms have improved/resolved and 24-hours fever-free. If symptoms persist for more than 2 days, then the employee should be evaluated by a healthcare professional.**
- If someone experiences certain uncommon symptoms within 3 days of receiving a vaccine: cough, shortness of breath, runny nose, sore throat, loss of taste or smell and they have not had a known exposure to a positive person, then they should follow the normal protocol for failing the screener and be excluded from work and evaluated for COVID (or potentially other illnesses) by a healthcare professional.**

In both of these scenarios, if the individual **has had a known exposure to a positive COVID person, he/she should follow the usual quarantine guidance and seek evaluation/testing.

What if a student/staff discloses close contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19?

- If someone has previously tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 3 months and is identified as a close contact, they do not need to quarantine if there are no symptoms present. If symptoms develop or it has been more than 3 months since the infection, the individual must follow usual quarantine requirements.
- If someone has been fully vaccinated for at least 2 weeks, they do not need to quarantine unless they develop symptoms.
- Student must leave school or not report to school.
- Instruct the student to self-quarantine for 10 days from the last exposure (14 days for any pre-k students or others who cannot adhere to strict precautions*).
- Students may end quarantine at 7 days if they do not have any symptoms and receive a negative PCR test on or after 5 days from exposure.
- Monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 and contact their healthcare provider if they develop symptoms.
- If they develop symptoms, they should be tested for COVID-19.
- If they do not develop symptoms, the recommendation is to be tested 5-7 days after exposure.
- A test is recommended for anyone who had known close contact with an individual who tested positive for COVID-19. However, a negative test is not required to return to school after completing the 10 or 14-day quarantine period, as long as the student remains asymptomatic.

*Strict precautions include: monitoring for symptoms and isolating if symptoms develop, wearing a face covering at all times in public and practicing social distancing.

Has CMS adopted the revised quarantine guidelines CDC released in December?

- Yes, in December 2020, the CDC published options to shorten the quarantine period in certain situations. The CDC and Mecklenburg County Public Health still recommend the 14-day quarantine period as the safest strategy for the lowest risk of spreading COVID-19. 14 day quarantine is required for Pre-K students due to Child Care Center guidelines. **Quarantine can discontinue after 10 days if someone is able to follow strict precautions at ALL times AND does not have any symptoms. Quarantine can end after 7 days if they also receive a negative PCR test.** *Strict precautions include: monitoring for symptoms and isolating if symptoms develop, wearing a face covering at all times in public and practicing social distancing.

What if someone has received the vaccine for COVID-19?

- If a vaccinated person is exposed to someone with confirmed COVID-19, they are NOT required to quarantine if they meet all of the following criteria:
 - Are fully vaccinated (i.e., ≥2 weeks following receipt of the second dose in a 2-dose series, or ≥2 weeks following receipt of one dose of a single-dose vaccine)
 - Have remained asymptomatic since the current COVID-19 exposure

Anyone who does not meet all of the above criteria should continue to follow current [quarantine guidance](#) after exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19.

What if someone travels?

The CDC recommends that you avoid non-essential travel at this time. Any travel increases your risk of being exposed to COVID-19. Anyone traveling internationally by air is required to have a negative COVID-19 test upon return to the US. Please remind staff and families that if they travel: avoid crowds and be sure to social distance and continue to wear face coverings. If you are not fully vaccinated, CDC recommends that if you travel that you get tested 1-3 days before travel, then test 3-5 days after travel and continue to quarantine for 7 days after traveling. We strongly encourage everyone to follow these guidelines, we do not expect schools to monitor or follow up on travel plans just encourage all to follow these recommendations.

What COVID related leave options are available?

- The **ONLY** available COVID-19 related paid leave for employees at this time is when the **Director of the local health department, orders an employee to leave his or her work environment if the employee has tested positive for COVID-19 and/or is being ordered to quarantine or isolate by the Director of the Local Health Department.** The appropriate documentation from the director of the local health department is **REQUIRED** for an employee to be eligible and approved for this paid leave. This is the only paid leave available and the director of the health department will determine the timeframe of the leave. **Failure to provide the required documentation from the local health department may result in unpaid leave time.**

Employees will be able to apply for this leave by <http://my.cms.k12.nc.us> and submitting the required documentation from the health department. Please contact the Benefits Leave department at leavedept@cms.k12.nc.us if you have any questions.