

2021-2022

Wilmington Public Schools

Respiratory Disease Prevention and Enhanced Outbreak Management and Control Protocols



**NOTE: This document is subject to change
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Introduction

Given the widespread availability of COVID-19 vaccines, at-home COVID-19 testing, medications to treat COVID-19, falling case counts, and our collective experience mitigating the spread of COVID-19 using layered mitigation strategies in our schools over the last two years, communities can begin to transition the management of COVID-19 in schools from a pandemic emergency response model toward a model that aligns with a more standard public health approach to the management and control of respiratory viral diseases. When applied in the PreK-12 school setting, this model focuses more on response to clusters of cases, outbreaks, and/or significant increases in community transmission.

The Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) encourages school districts that consider it appropriate or necessary to continue implementing some or all the previous [guidance for mitigation strategies](#).

Considerations for Boards of Education Regarding Potential Changes to School COVID-19 Practices

When considering changes to district COVID-19 policies and mitigation strategies, including the wearing of masks, school leaders should consider several factors in consultation with public health, education, and community stakeholders.

General Guidance for Assessing COVID-19 Risk

Many environmental factors contribute to the transmission of respiratory viruses such as COVID-19. When case rates of COVID-19 in a community are high, the likelihood that any individual person in a group could be infectious is higher. Likewise, when those rates are lower and/or fewer individuals in a community are susceptible to a particular virus due to vaccination or recent recovery from infection, the likelihood of being in contact with an infectious person is lower. The experience with variants of the virus that causes COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2) that have circulated widely in our state to date has indicated that individuals who are school-aged, in generally good health, and up-to-date with COVID-19 vaccinations are at lower risk for developing severe outcomes from COVID-19 if they become infected.

Considerations for School Districts

Here are some questions to consider when contemplating COVID-19 policy changes for schools including maintaining universal masking in schools or transitioning to “mask optional” policies. Although not an exhaustive list, the questions below reflect some of the topics that DPH and CSDE recommend school districts include in their discussion and decision-making process.

1. What does the available data indicate regarding the level of COVID-19 transmission in the community and the school district?

Periodic review of community data points, including those maintained by state and federal public health agencies, to assess trends and determine whether it is necessary or appropriate to rescind, revise, or redeploy mitigation strategies will be utilized.

2. What is the risk tolerance in your school district for the possibility of increasing case numbers and necessary quarantine and isolation of your students and staff?

The district will determine whether implementing fewer in-school mitigation strategies will have any effect on in-person learning and the appropriateness of masking policies related to the percentage of vaccinated students.

3. What is the current COVID-19 vaccination status of students and staff within individual schools and across the district, and what is the current COVID-19 vaccine coverage for the surrounding community?

The district will identify the percentage of students (by age group) and staff who are vaccinated.

4. What additional planning is necessary to address the needs of students and staff who may be at greater risk for adverse health outcomes?

We have evaluated the impact on medically fragile or immunocompromised students and staff who are at risk if they become infected with COVID-19 and identified provisions to reduce their risk of infection.

5. What assistance can be provided to students and staff making personal decisions regarding mask-wearing?

We will support students and staff who may wish to continue wearing masks as they may experience stress, fear, or anxiety being in school situations where masks are not being worn. Many younger students have never experienced school without having everyone masked.

6. What processes need to be in place for continuous risk assessment and decision-making regarding COVID-19 policies and mitigation strategies going forward?

WPS will update its outbreak control protocols, including modifications to masking policies (see below).

7. What advanced contingency planning needs to occur to prepare for potential surges and/or outbreaks?

WPS has plans to respond to surges and/or outbreaks of COVID-19 in individual schools, and/or the community, which may result in an increase or decrease of mitigation strategies.

Routine Strategies for COVID-19 Prevention

- Recommending COVID-19 vaccination for all eligible students and staff, including [booster](#) vaccine doses when appropriate.
- Supporting students and staff who choose to continue [wearing a mask](#) even when school policies do not require their use.
- Following [isolation guidelines](#) for students and staff who have symptoms associated with, or have tested positive for, COVID-19.
- Recommending [COVID-19 transmission prevention strategies](#), including testing (self-testing and/or at provider sites) and masking for students and staff, following illness or exposures to COVID-19 cases.
- Continuing to advise parents to report all cases of COVID-19 to the school and subsequently schools continuing to report identified cases to their local health department and the Connecticut Department of Public Health.
- Being prepared to respond quickly to rapid increases in cases or clusters of cases in schools (including increases in absenteeism due to respiratory illness) as described below.
- Continuing to follow [existing quarantine guidance](#) for students and staff who have been notified of certain higher-risk close contact exposures (e.g., household exposures, crowded social gatherings).

Willington Public Schools Protocols

Physical Plant Protocols

- Students continue to sit 3 feet apart, and desks can be together.
- Water fountains that have push buttons for mouthpieces will continue to be closed. Water fountains with touchless bottle fillers will be open for use.
- Ventilation systems will continue to operate at full capacity while buildings are occupied.
- Rooms without ventilation will utilize a mounted fan exhausting air out of the classroom window.
- Air conditioning units may be utilized, however, air must blow away from individuals.
- Portable fans are not permitted.

Food Services Protocols

- Meals will be served in the cafeteria with students alternating seats so they are not next to or directly across from another student.

Mask Protocols

- Teacher and student face masks are optional starting March 9, 2022.
- Any school community member entering the nurse's office must wear a mask.
- Students participating in singing activities must wear a mask unless they can maintain 6 feet between themselves.
- Students playing brass instruments must continue to utilize bell covers in band.
- Mask breaks will no longer be provided after March 8, 2022.

Attendance Protocols

- Students and staff with a temperature greater than 100.4 degrees are not permitted in school. Students and staff will be allowed to return 24 hours after a fever has broken, with a note from their healthcare provider, or with a documented negative COVID-19 test.
- Parents are to inform the school nurse if their child is sick with COVID-19 symptoms or if they had known contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19. Parents will be encouraged to seek medical evaluation and COVID-19 testing.

Automatic Dismissal Protocols

- Students who are symptomatic while entering school or become symptomatic during the school day will be separated into the isolation room by the school nurse.
- Students/staff are required to leave school grounds if they exhibit symptoms consistent with COVID-19.

Clusters and Outbreaks Protocols

A cluster is defined as 10% of students and/or staff within a specified group (ie. classroom, bus, reading group, grade) OR 3 or more students and/or staff within a specified group who test positive for COVID-19 within a 14-day period. If a cluster is identified, more information should be gathered to identify possible sources of exposure.

An outbreak is a cluster where in-school transmission was highly likely. If an outbreak is identified, Willington Public Schools will follow DPH recommendations for enhanced mitigation strategies for outbreak control including:

- Implementing a local universal masking policy for students and staff on a temporary basis. Implementation of masking can be done at the classroom, grade, or school level depending on the extension of transmission and structure of the school.
- Limiting mixing of impacted grades, classrooms, or other groups (i.e., cohorting) during meals, recess, and other gathering times to limit spread.
- Limiting outside visitors to the school to those who are necessary for instructional or student support purposes.

- Staff and families will be notified of outbreaks or clusters if their child is part of the identified group.
- If a cluster cannot be controlled with these strategies it may develop into a worsening cluster, defined as 20% of the group testing positive within 21 days. In this situation, the Willington Public Schools would contact Eastern Highlands Health District and the Department of Public Health to discuss further mitigation strategies, including the potential of temporarily closing school.

Quarantine and Isolation Protocols

The Willington Public Schools will continue following the recommendations of EHHD and DPH regarding quarantine and isolation periods.

Positive Cases

Individuals must isolate for 5 days after symptom onset (or positive test date if asymptomatic) and return on day 6, at which time they must wear a mask through day 10. If they cannot or choose not to mask for days 6-10, the individual must delay their return to school until day 11.

Close Contacts of Known Positive Cases

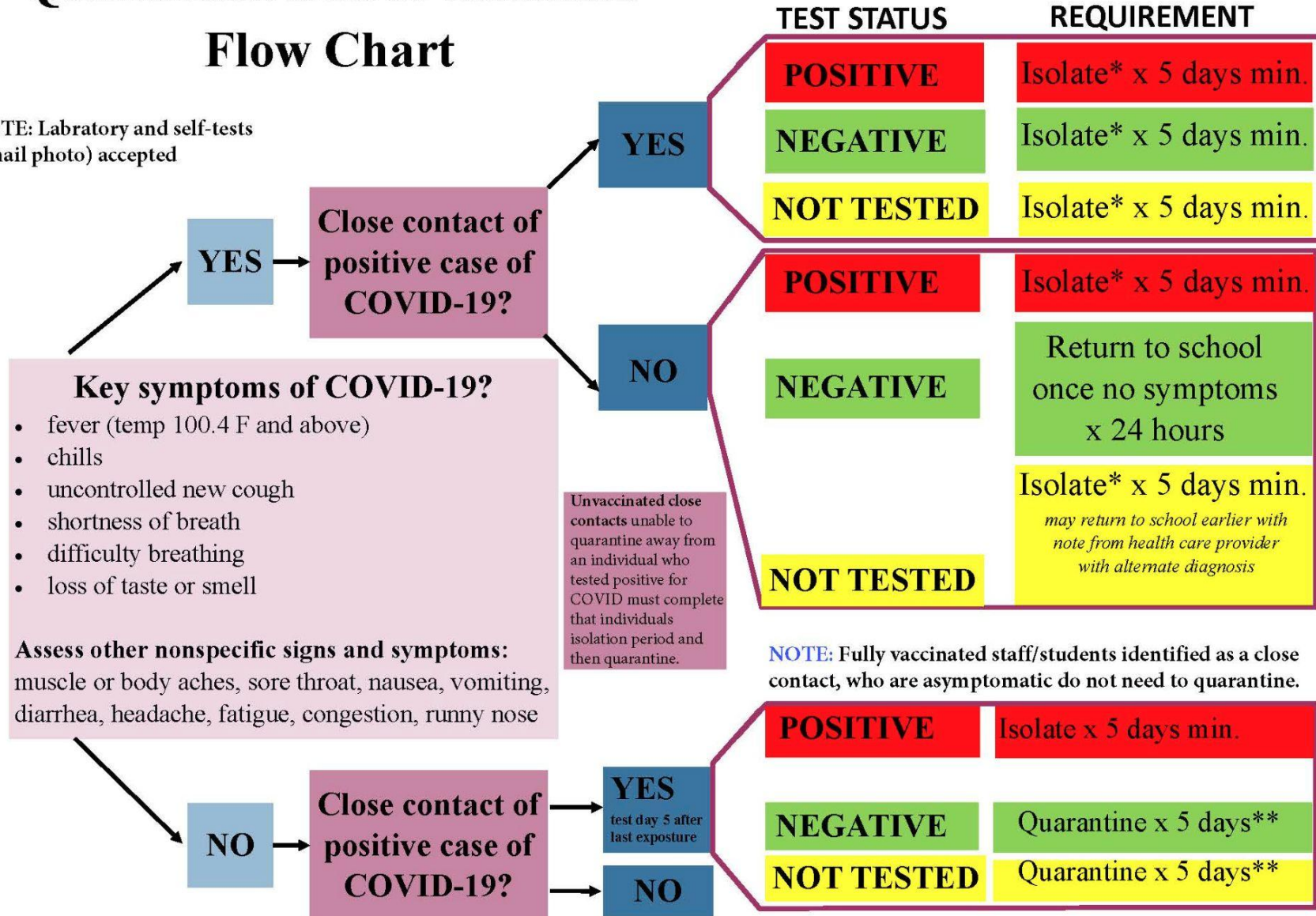
Unvaccinated contacts of a positive case should quarantine at home for 5 days following their last exposure to the positive case. They may return on day 6 provided they remain symptom-free. Home testing on day 5 prior to return is required. Contacts who have tested positive in the past 90 days do not need to quarantine as long as they remain symptom-free. Vaccinated individuals who are asymptomatic do not need to quarantine.

The Willington Board of Education grants the Superintendent of Schools the authority to modify district protocols in consultation with Eastern Highlands Health District and the Department of Public Health as necessary.

Quarantine and/or Isolation

Flow Chart

NOTE: Laboratory and self-tests (email photo) accepted



*Isolate for at least 5 days since onset of symptoms and until at least 24 hours without fever (w/out fever-reducing medications) and show improvement in symptoms.

**Quarantine for 5 days and monitor for symptoms. Isolate immediately if symptoms develop and contact school nurse.

POSITIVE cases must wear a mask on the bus and during all school activities on days 6-10 OR they must isolate for 10 days.