



Macomb County Health Department

# Return to School Toolkit



**Health  
Department**

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## Guidance Introduction

This guidance document was written to coincide with MI Safe Schools: Michigan’s 2020-21 Return to School Roadmap and is intended to supplement a school’s Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Preparedness and Response Plan. This document is based on current information and recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and may be revised and updated as new information becomes available. As long as there are cases of COVID-19 in the community, it will not be possible to prevent all COVID-19 transmission in schools. The goal is to keep the risk of transmission as low as possible so that school and school activities can be conducted as safely as possible.

## Symptoms of COVID-19

Students and staff should not go to school or participate in any school activities if they are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19. If they begin having symptoms of COVID-19 while at school, they should be sent home. Symptoms of COVID-19 are listed on the CDC website at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html> and include:

Symptoms of COVID-19
Temperature 100.4°F or higher when taken by mouth
Sore throat
New or worsening cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
Diarrhea or vomiting
Headache
Chills or rigors (severe chills with shivering)
Loss of taste or smell
Runny nose or congestion
Muscle Aches
Fatigue
Nausea

The parent/guardian of a student with COVID-19 symptoms should be instructed to call their health care provider, or if they do not have a health care provider, to follow up with a local clinic or urgent care center. The parent/guardian can also call 2-1-1 or go to [www.mi.gov/coronavirustest](http://www.mi.gov/coronavirustest) or [www.macombgov.org/COVID19](http://www.macombgov.org/COVID19) to find the closest location to have the student tested for COVID-19. Staff with symptoms of COVID-19 should also be evaluated by a health care provider and tested for COVID-19.

There is some overlap between the list of COVID-19 symptoms and the symptoms of other common ailments, including seasonal allergies. Students or staff with pre-existing health conditions that experience COVID-19-like symptoms may not need to be excluded from school if a health care provider has evaluated them and determined the symptoms were related to an illness other than COVID-19.

## How Does COVID-19 Spread?

COVID-19 can spread by droplets (most likely), aerosols (less likely), and objects (least likely).

### Droplets

Droplets are small particles that enter the air when people cough, sneeze, laugh, yell, or talk. They are little flecks of spit. Droplets tend to settle out of the air after traveling several feet from the person who generated them. Droplets can also spread directly by kissing or sharing personal items like drinks, vape pens, or silverware. Reducing the spread of droplets can be accomplished by wearing a face covering, avoiding large groups of people, and staying more than 6 feet away from others.

### Aerosols

Aerosols are even smaller than droplets and are created when people breathe, talk, sing, sneeze, or cough. They are lighter and can stay in the air much longer than droplets but dry up more quickly. Reducing the spread of aerosols may be accomplished by increasing outdoor air ventilation or by filtering air that is recirculated.

### Objects

Objects can spread the COVID-19 virus when droplets or aerosols settle on them or when someone with COVID-19 touches their nose or mouth and then touches an object. The COVID-19 virus may stay on objects for one to three days. The spread of COVID-19 through objects may be reduced by encouraging frequent handwashing, instructing people not to touch their face, frequent cleaning and disinfection, and the use of automatic or touchless controls.

### Face Coverings Help Prevent the Spread of COVID-19

Face coverings help prevent people who have COVID-19 from spreading the virus to others. Face coverings may be made of cloth (preferably multi-layered) or they may be disposable surgical or N95 masks. Cloth face coverings should be washed daily and disposable face masks should be disposed of at the end of each day. Face coverings are not required for students or staff. However, students and staff who are not fully vaccinated should consider wearing a face covering when indoors, especially in crowded settings. Children under the age of two years should not wear a face covering.

## How Do We Get Infected with COVID-19?

### Intensity of Exposure

The intensity of exposure refers to how much virus a person is exposed to. Was the infected person actually contagious when someone was exposed to them? Were they coughing and sneezing without a face covering versus having no symptoms with a face covering on? Did they kiss someone? Did they share personal items like a drink or a vape pen? Did they sit right next to others and have a face-to-face conversation with them or were they 6 feet away with their back to them? Some situations can cause a person to be exposed to more virus than other situations. The more virus a person is exposed to, the more likely they are to get sick.

### Frequency of Exposure

The frequency of exposure refers to how often a person had contact with someone who was contagious. If a person had a brief face-to-face conversation with a teacher every day for several days while the teacher was contagious with COVID-19, those interactions may add up to be enough exposure to overwhelm a person's immune system and lead to an infection.

### Duration of Exposure

The duration of exposure refers to how long a person was exposed. If a person was in a classroom with someone with COVID-19 for six hours a day for several days, yet their seat was not within six feet of the person with COVID-19, the duration of exposure may be sufficient to result in transmission particularly from aerosols and objects in that classroom.

### Personal Health

Personal health, including the status of a person's immune system, may also play a role in whether or not they get infected and how severe their illness may be.

## Managing COVID-19 in the School

### Designate a COVID-19 Point of Contact

Schools should designate a staff person (e.g., school nurse) to be responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns as well as a secondary person to help with difficult situations and cover absences. All school staff and families should know who this person is and how to contact them.

### Identify Small Groups and Keep Them Together (Cohorting)

Although keeping students 6 feet apart is one of the preferred mitigation strategies, this may be difficult to achieve in a school setting. Another important tool to help contain the spread of COVID-19 in schools is the cohorting of students and staff. Cohorts may be identified by classroom and/or groups within a classroom. Cohorts are important because they limit the number of students and teachers who are exposed to COVID-19 should someone at school be contagious.

A cohort should stay together as much as possible throughout the day. For example, a cohort should eat together in the cafeteria or have recess together on the playground. Older students can stay with a cohort through their core classes. There should be limited interactions between different cohorts and student and staff groupings should be as fixed as possible (all day for young children and as much as possible for older children).



## Staggered Scheduling

- Arrival and drop-off times or locations should be staggered by cohort to limit contact between cohorts and to limit direct contact with parents/guardians as much as possible.
- When possible, staff should be permitted to use flexible worksites and flexible work hours to help establish social distancing between employees and other persons.

## Gatherings, Visitors, and Field Trips

- Schools should pursue virtual group events, gatherings, or meetings, if possible, and promote social distancing of at least 6 feet between people if events are held. Group sizes should be limited to the extent possible.
- Schools should limit the number of nonessential visitors and volunteers who enter the school building and should limit activities involving external groups or organizations.
- Schools should pursue virtual activities and events in lieu of field trips, student assemblies, special performances, and school-wide parent/guardian meetings as much as possible.
- Sporting events should be conducted in ways that minimizes the risk of transmission of COVID-19 to players, families, coaches, and communities.

## Recommendations for Screening and the Management of Students or Staff Persons with Confirmed or Probable COVID-19

### COVID-19 Screening

#### For School Staff

All staff should self-monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 prior to leaving for work each day. An example of an employee self-monitoring screening tool is in [Appendix A](#). Another option is to use a virtual screener like the MI Symptom App (<https://misymptomapp.state.mi.us/login>) developed by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS).

#### For Students

CDC does not currently recommend universal symptom screenings (screening all students, grades K-12) be conducted by schools. Parents/guardians should be encouraged to monitor their children for signs and symptoms of infectious illness every day before they leave for school. An example of a screening tool for parents/guardians is in [Appendix B](#). Students who are sick should not attend school in-person.

#### For Visitors

All visitors entering the school (e.g., delivery persons, mail carriers, food vendors, parents/guardians) should be screened prior to entry. Any individual who does not meet the screening criteria should not be granted access to the school.

### School or the MCHD learn of a student or staff person with confirmed or probable COVID-19

Students or staff persons with confirmed or probable COVID-19 must be reported to the MCHD (see Appendix C). A school will be notified by the MCHD if a student or staff person with confirmed or probable COVID-19 is reported to the Health Department by a healthcare provider or laboratory. Only a select few people at a school should know the identity of the person. These few individuals are critical to help identify close contacts and to

determine which areas of the school may need cleaning and disinfection. See [Students and Staff Persons with Symptoms of COVID-19 or Who Have Tested Positive for COVID-19](#) for more specific information.

## Identifying Close Contacts

A person with confirmed or probable COVID-19 is considered to be contagious 48 hours prior to symptom onset or, if asymptomatic, 48 hours prior to the date a person was tested for COVID-19. All individuals who were in contact with the person in that timeframe should be identified by the school. The MCHD will work with the school to determine who meets the definition of a close contact. These individuals are at higher risk of developing an infection and are required to quarantine for at least 10 days. Quarantine is not necessary for persons diagnosed with COVID-19 in the past 3 months, for persons fully vaccinated against COVID-19, or for students exposed only in the classroom, while both the index case and the close contact were masked and sitting at least 3 feet apart but less than 6 feet apart.

## Who is a close contact?

A close contact is most often someone who has been within 6 feet (about 2 arm lengths) of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period with or without a face covering. The MCHD may determine that a distance beyond 6 feet or a time period of less than a total of 15 minutes can still result in a high risk of transmission based on other considerations and circumstances.

## Examples of Close Contacts in Schools

Assuming all COVID-19 prevention methods have been followed (everyone has been consistently and properly using face coverings, washing hands frequently, maintaining physical distancing as best as possible), close contacts may include:

- **Teachers:** Current information indicates that adults may be more contagious than young children. If a teacher with COVID-19 has not stayed at least 6 feet away from students while teaching, the entire class may need to be quarantined.
- **Classmates:** Classmates sitting within 6 feet of a student with COVID-19 are considered close contacts unless this occurred only one time and it was for less than a total of 15 minutes. This would typically involve one or two rows of classmates sitting closest to the contagious person.
- **Lunch mates:** Lunch mates sitting within 6 feet of a student with COVID-19 are considered close contacts. This is considered a high risk situation because face coverings are not worn during eating.
- **Playmates:** Playmates on a playground or in a gym who are within 6 feet of a student with COVID-19 are considered close contacts unless the interaction was brief (less than a total of 15 minutes), no common items were shared and locker room time was not shared.
- **Sports teammates:** Teammates who were within 6 feet of a student with COVID-19 are considered close contacts unless the interaction were brief (less than a total of 15 minutes), no common items were shared and locker room time was not shared.

Parents/guardians should be aware of where their child has been and who they have spent time with outside of school. This will help identify close contacts outside of school should someone become infected.



## Contacts of Close Contacts

Since close contacts are not yet known to be infected, the contacts to those contacts do not need to be identified or quarantined.

### *Example of a contact of a contact:*

Bob sits next to Fred in class. Fred has confirmed or probable COVID-19. Bob needs to be in quarantine but is healthy at this time. Bob plays on the football team. No one on the football team has been near Fred. Therefore, the football team doesn't need to be notified about Fred being sick.

## Reporting Close Contacts to the MCHD

Schools should identify and report potential close contacts to the MCHD within 24 hours of receiving notification of a person with confirmed or probable COVID-19. [Appendix D](#) may be used to collect this information.

## Cleaning and Disinfecting Affected Area

The school should close off areas used by an infected person for 24 hours prior to cleaning and disinfecting. If 24 hours is not feasible, wait as long as possible. Ensure safe and correct usage and storage of cleaning and disinfection products ([Reopening Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces, Workplaces, Businesses, Schools, and Homes](#)).

## Communication with Parents/Guardians and Staff

Schools should notify all families and staff if a student or staff person with confirmed or probable COVID-19 is identified in a school. Identified close contacts should receive a separate communication indicating the need for school exclusion and a quarantine period. The identity of a person with COVID-19 must be kept confidential following the requirements of the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

## School Closures and Remote Learning

There may be a time where cases in a school increase to a point where closing the school for in-person learning might be the best option to protect students and staff. The need to close a school for a period of time because of COVID-19 illness will be determined by the district superintendent on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the MCHD.

## Resources

### MI Safe Schools Return to School Roadmap

Follow the instructions of the [MI SAFE SCHOOLS: Michigan's 2020-2021 Return to School Roadmap](#) for the current Macomb County reopening phase.

### CDC Materials

[Class Rules](#)

[Cover Coughs and Sneezes](#)

[Did you Wash Your Hands?](#)

[Do it for Yourself and your Friends](#)

[Don't Feel Well? Stay Home When You Are Sick](#)

[Don't Let Your Germs Go for a Ride](#)

[Help Protect Yourself and Others from COVID-19](#)

[Keep Space Between You and Others](#)

[Please Wear a Cloth Face Covering](#)

[Available in multiple languages](#)

[Protect Yourself and Others from COVID-19](#)

[Slow the Spread of COVID-19](#)

[Stop the Spread](#)

[Stop the Spread of Germs](#)

[Available in multiple languages](#)

[Symptoms of Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

[Wear a Cloth Face Covering to Protect You and Your Friends](#)

[What Your Test Results Mean](#)

### [VIDEO: How to Wear a Cloth Face Covering](#)