

Purpose

These guidelines are intended to help school/childcare personnel identify, report, control and prevent suspected COVID-19 outbreaks.

NOTE: During non-outbreak situations in response to individual cases, please refer to the [DHEC School and Childcare Exclusion list](#) and [CDC Operational Guidance for K-12 Schools and childcare settings](#).

Criteria for Reporting Outbreaks

Monitoring absentee rates and parent reports of COVID-19 in students and staff can help identify potential outbreaks. Immediately notify the regional health department when:

- 20% or more of the children/students/staff within a shared setting* (i.e., a classroom, shared childcare room, sports team, or other group) are identified as having COVID-19, or absent or sent home due to COVID-19 within 72 hours of each other.

For example, in a group with 20 students/staff, contact DHEC when at least four (4) students/teachers were absent or sent home with reported COVID-19 within 72 hours of each other.

*For shared settings with more than 5 students/staff total.

Please note: Each time a **new** outbreak is identified, **initial reporting of the outbreak is required**; reporting on subsequent days of the same outbreak is not necessary.

However, during an outbreak if an unusual or atypical situation arises (e.g., severe morbidity, multiple hospitalizations), please contact the regional health department.

Outbreaks should be considered over when COVID-19 absenteeism numbers within the school decrease to a percentage below the criteria listed above or no new COVID-19 cases have been reported within the cohort for ten (10) consecutive school/childcare days.

Identification of Cases & Close Contacts

Cases: Identify and isolate all cases of COVID-19. Those with COVID-19 should stay home until they have had no fever for 24 hours without use of fever-reducing medication AND improvement of symptoms AND at least 5 days have passed since symptoms first appeared. They may return on day 6 but **must** wear a mask through day 10.

If multiple individuals (students or staff) are noted to have similar symptoms consistent with COVID-19, testing is recommended for these individuals to determine if COVID-19 is causing their illness. Symptoms of COVID-19 can be similar to those of influenza. DHEC encourages ill persons to get tested for COVID-19 **and** influenza. For more information, refer to the [DHEC School and Child Care Exclusion List](#) to determine when positive cases can return to school/childcare.

Close Contacts: During an outbreak, identify all close contacts to a COVID-19 case.

In an outbreak situation, **quarantine** is required for an individual who is a close contact, with the following **two exceptions**:

- Individuals who are up-to-date on COVID-19 vaccination and do not have symptoms do NOT need to quarantine after a close contact.
 - DHEC recommends testing at day five (5).
 - Individuals **must** wear a mask for 10 days unless eating or drinking or more than six feet from anyone else when outdoors.
- People who have tested positive (PCR or antigen test) for COVID-19 within the past 90 days and recovered and do not have symptoms - do NOT need to quarantine after a close contact.
 - Individuals **must** wear a mask for 10 days unless eating or drinking or more than six feet from anyone else when outdoors.

Close contacts may return from quarantine once five days have passed since their last exposure to the person(s) with COVID-19 and no symptoms have been reported during daily symptom monitoring at home. (Last day of exposure is day 0, the close contact must quarantine on days 1-5. The soonest a close contact required to quarantine may return is on Day 6). The individual **must** then wear a mask through day 10. A COVID test collected no sooner than day 5 is recommended and should be performed if available. If symptoms develop, refer to the guidance within the [DHEC School and Childcare Exclusion List](#) for information on when they may return.

Notification should be sent to close contacts or those in the same cohort with a COVID-19 positive individual, instructing them to:

- Quarantine if appropriate,
- Wear a mask as indicated, and
- Monitor for symptoms.

What to Report

Report as much of the following outbreak information, as available, when notifying the regional health department (Schools should use the Reporting Worksheet):

- School/Childcare name
- Number of students/staff absent or sent home
- Number of students/staff known to have tested positive for COVID-19
- Baseline/typical absenteeism per day
- Earliest illness onset date and latest illness onset date
- Total enrollment (students and staff)
- Total number in group/cohort, if applicable

How to Report

Childcare Centers – Notify your health department

Schools - Fax the Reporting Worksheet to your health department

<u>Lowcountry</u>	<u>Midlands</u>	<u>Pee Dee</u>	<u>Upstate</u>
Allendale, Bamberg, Beaufort, Berkeley, Calhoun, Charleston, Colleton, Dorchester, Hampton, Jasper, Orangeburg	Aiken, Barnwell, Chester, Edgefield, Fairfield, Lancaster, Lexington, Kershaw, Newberry, Richland, Saluda, York	Clarendon, Chesterfield, Darlington, Dillon, Florence, Georgetown, Horry, Lee, Marion, Marlboro, Sumter, Williamsburg	Abbeville, Anderson, Cherokee, Greenville, Greenwood, Laurens, McCormick, Oconee, Pickens, Spartanburg, Union
4050 Bridge View Drive, Suite 600 N. Charleston, SC 29405	2000 Hampton Street Columbia, SC 29204	1931 Industrial Park Road Conway, SC 29526	200 University Ridge Greenville, SC 29602
Office: (843) 441-1091 Fax: (843) 953-0051 Nights/Weekends: (843) 441-1091	Office: (888) 801-1046 Fax: (803) 576-2993 Nights/Weekends: (888) 801-1046	Office: (843) 915-8886 Fax: (843) 915-6506 Nights/Weekends: (843) 409-0695	Office: (864) 372-3133 Fax: (864) 282-4373 Nights/Weekends: (864) 423-6648

Special Circumstances

In the event, another coronavirus strain emerges, or significant morbidity and mortality are reported in individuals with positive COVID-19 test results, schools may be required to report absenteeism rates and/or complete a line list.

Completed

Recommendations for Prevention and Control During an Outbreak

Resources

Vaccination



Encourage COVID-19 vaccine for all students and staff unless they cannot receive it for medical reasons.

[CDC COVID-19 Vaccine
COVID Vaccine](#)

Masks



Encourage masking indoors for students and staff when community levels are high, or the school is experiencing an outbreak.

[CDC Community Levels](#)



Require masks for cases and close contacts returning to school after day five since illness onset for cases and date of last exposure for close contacts until day 10.

[CDC Masks](#)



Require masks to be worn at school by close contacts that are vaccinated or previously infected (within 90 days) until 10 days past last exposure.

Testing



Encourage COVID-19 testing of all students and staff with symptoms of COVID-19 and known close contacts.

[COVID-19 Tests](#)

Clean and Disinfect Surfaces



Follow your facility's policies for cleaning and disinfecting. In particular, ensure that frequently touched surfaces such as doorknobs, tables, desks, computer keyboards, handrails, etc., are routinely cleaned.

[Cleaning and Disinfecting](#)

Good Hygiene Etiquette



Reinforce opportunities for students and staff to engage in hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene, and cough etiquette.

- Handwashing should occur upon reentering the building from recess, after handling trash, before eating, after coughing and sneezing, and after using the bathroom.
- Students and staff should cover their nose and mouth with a tissue or their upper sleeve when coughing or sneezing.
- Place tissue in a trash bin after use and wash hands.
- Provide adequate supplies for hand washing and hygiene.
- Currently, face masks are highly recommended for students and staff during high community levels to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 during outbreaks.

[CDC Handwashing](#)

Limit Contact with Others when Sick



Avoid close contact (i.e., within 3-6 feet) with ill persons.



Ensure staff and students with COVID-19 are appropriately excluded from school.

[CDC Quarantine & Isolation](#)



Ensure procedures are in place to monitor reports of illness in students and staff.



Notify staff, students, parents/guardians of any possible exposures to an individual with COVID-19.

Definitions

Close contact: Someone who was within six (6) feet of an infected person (laboratory-confirmed or a clinically compatible illness) for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period (for example, three individual 5-minute exposures for a total of 15 minutes) from 48 hours prior to symptom onset (or specimen collection for an asymptomatic infected person) of the infected person, until they meet criteria for [discontinuing home isolation](#).

- The close contact definition excludes students who were within 3 to 6 feet of an infected student (laboratory-confirmed or a clinically compatible illness) if the exposed student(s) wore mask(s) during the exposure time. This exception does not apply to teachers, staff, or other adults in the indoor classroom setting.
- Close physical contact can include contact with the mucous membranes of a COVID infected person through such things as, kissing, sharing eating/drinking utensils, etc., regardless of the time frame.

Contact tracing: The practice of identifying, notifying, and monitoring individuals who may have had close contact with a person determined to be a confirmed or probable case of an infectious disease as a means of controlling the spread of infection.

Isolation: Isolation is used to separate people infected with the virus (those who are sick with COVID-19 and those with no symptoms) from people who are not infected. They must remain at home or the place they were told to isolate and avoid contact with other people until their isolation period is over. This includes avoiding contact with those in their household as much as possible.

Quarantine: Quarantine is used to separate people who are close contacts of someone with a contagious disease, like COVID-19, from others for a period of time to see if they become sick. This is a method to prevent the spread of disease. When someone is quarantining, they should stay home and avoid contact with other people until the quarantine period is over. This includes people in their household as much as it is possible.

Vaccinated: Definitions vary by age for fully vaccinated and up-to-date on vaccination and can be found on the [CDC COVID Vaccine](#) website.

Resources

CDC guidance: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-childcare-guidance.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fcommunity%2Fschools-childcare%2Fk-12-guidance.html

Exclusion list: <https://scdhec.gov/health/child-teen-health/school-exclusion>

CDC home test: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/testing/index.html>

CDC letter templates: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-contact-tracing/letters.html>

Mask wearing: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/about-face-coverings.html>

Attestation Form: <https://scdhec.gov/sites/default/files/media/document/Attestation-Form-for-At-Home-COVID-19-Test-2022-01-09.pdf>