

Planning for COVID-19 Scenarios in Schools

A Toolkit for School Leaders and Local Public Health Authorities

Updated March 9, 2022

Any substantial changes in this version have been marked up in *green italics* to help track changes. The use of italics and a different color is for meeting accessibility requirements and does not signal any specific emphasis or importance.

Introduction

This resource was prepared by the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) and the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) with additional input from local public health authorities (LPHA), school nurses, and school leaders to support school staff's ability to respond well to COVID-19 related illness events. This document outlines some critical steps and offers an overview of decision points, but it does not replace medical expertise, epidemiologist knowledge, or practical solutions in local schools. Each school leader will need to continually evaluate the response to outbreak protocols, update plans, and balance health and safety with core instructional needs for schools.

Purpose of this Toolkit

This toolkit is designed to support school leaders and local public health authorities in their shared role in responding to COVID-19-related illness events in schools. This toolkit details specific scenarios and immediate action steps required to respond and communicate when a student or staff member:

- Becomes ill with COVID-19 symptoms
- Tests positive for COVID-19

Each scenario requires action on behalf of the school and *may require* close collaboration with the LPHA. The LPHA has authority to make public health decisions, including recommendations. This guide is not intended to be the final word for all possible situations; in some situations, an LPHA may make recommendations that differ from those contained in this guide.

To help school leaders, [a Communications Toolkit has been created](#) that includes customizable communication templates, including letters and notifications to families, talking points and a press release to use with the media, and other tools aligned to the scenarios presented here.

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Using This Toolkit

There is no one correct way to access the information in this toolkit. It is intended to be a resource that school leaders can access and use as the need emerges. However, given the highly technical information contained in this toolkit, being able to apply this guidance in a timely manner as the need arises requires that school leaders:

1. Carefully read this document in its entirety before the need to utilize it.
2. Review each scenario and consider how that scenario would unfold, if realized in their local context. Consider:
 - a. How well the current operational plan supports the school's response in this scenario and if updates are needed;
 - b. How this scenario would impact teaching and learning within the school; and
 - c. [Which communication tool\(s\) would be used](#) and how/how much they would need to be adapted prior to use.
3. Help your staff to understand the content in this toolkit prior to it being needed. The additional stresses related to having positive cases in your school community will make it hard for staff to access this information in real time without prior knowledge and understanding.

About Scenarios

Carefully read through the scenarios and terms in this document. Each scenario is an example event that involves a school and LPHA's response to a COVID-19 illness at a school. The scenarios share required steps for the school leaders *and possibly* the LPHA.

Becomes Ill Scenarios: Refers to a student or staff member who becomes ill with COVID-19 symptoms.

Tests Positive Scenarios: Refers to one or more student or staff member having a positive result on a COVID-19 viral test, including the action necessary if in the same or different cohorts.

Tests Negative *or Has Not Been Tested* Scenarios: Refers to an ill student or staff member who has a negative result on a COVID-19 viral test *or has not been tested in response to specific events.*

Common Protocols

Overall Framework for Isolation

People who have COVID-19 **should isolate** for *at least 5 days after their symptoms started (or, if they have no symptoms, for at least 5 days after the test date)* and 24 hours after any fever has resolved without the use of fever-reducing medicine and other symptoms are improving. They should wear a mask around other people for an additional 5 days (10 days following their symptom onset or date of their positive test), including outdoors. *(Isolation period is 10-20 days if suffering from severe to critical illness related to COVID-19, if hospitalized for COVID-19, or if the individual has a severely compromised immune system.)*

Pause to Quarantine and Contact Tracing

On February 28, 2022, the CDC updated their guidance regarding case investigation and contact tracing. Universal case investigation and contact tracing are no longer recommended outside of high-risk settings. Effective March 12, 2022, Oregon will pause contact tracing and quarantine for the general population, including K-12 settings. The decision to pause contact tracing and quarantine is based in science and acknowledges that these practices now have very limited if any impact on the transmission of COVID-19 in our communities. SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, has evolved to become one of the most transmissible viruses known. By the time an exposure is identified and contact tracing is performed, transmission has already occurred. Following the Omicron surge, and for the first time during the COVID-19 pandemic, Oregon will have very high levels of vaccine- and infection-induced immunity. The duration of this immunity is unknown, but is believed to provide protection from reinfection for at least 90 days. In lieu of contact tracing, schools are strongly encouraged to provide cohort notifications when exposures occur. These notifications allow individuals and families to take additional precautions according to their individual needs.

New Test to Stay (Enhanced Exposure Testing)

Because quarantine is no longer required in K-12 settings, regardless of vaccination status, test to stay will shift from a form of modified quarantine to enhanced exposure testing. Students and staff may continue to attend school regardless of their participation in enhanced exposure testing. Testing all exposed individuals in a population with high levels of immunity is neither feasible nor likely to benefit health and safety. Schools may offer enhanced exposure testing to individuals at increased risk of severe illness, e.g., cohorts which include medically fragile individuals.

Test to stay (enhanced exposure testing) should be used for students or staff at increased risk of severe COVID-19, and at the direction of their LPHA, such as during an outbreak response.

Testing at schools:

Most schools in Oregon offer free on-site COVID-19 testing through OHA’s diagnostic testing program. Any student or staff member at a school enrolled in OHA’s diagnostic testing program with COVID-19 symptoms or recent exposure to a person with COVID-19 can access testing through this program. More information is available here:

- [Oregon Health Authority : Oregon's COVID-19 Testing in K-12 schools](#)
- [OHA 3560 COVID-19 Testing in Oregon’s K-12 Schools](#)

Identify Area of Responsibility and Next Steps outlined in Scenarios

The scenario tables offer different examples with critical steps for schools. School and classroom sizes are highly variable across Oregon, and cohort sizes also vary. Schools should consider the sizes of potentially affected cohorts when determining if closures are necessary. **Schools should strive to maintain small “stable cohorts,” as this will minimize disruptions when a case of COVID-19 is identified in a school.**

The response to a case of COVID-19 in the school setting requires a collaboration among many community partners. The following guidance tables categorize general “involved groups” in the response, in order to fit as many school settings as possible. It is recognized that the tables do not capture the community-level partners that may be critical in supporting public health. This includes the active community partners that support Oregon’s schools, school districts, LPHAs, and the Oregon Health Authority.

The scenario tables below are intended to be a guide and may not cover every possible situation. In some cases, the local public health authority (LPHA) may make decisions that differ from the scenarios. LPHAs have the authority to make exceptions or take additional measures as needed to protect the public’s health.

2021-22 Communications Toolkit

School and district leaders are encouraged to [use the tools linked on this page](#) to communicate with staff, school boards, students, families, the media and their community about the 2021-22 school year. The tools are customizable, and intended to serve as a starting point for school leaders to modify as needed to communicate with their community.

Symptoms of COVID-19

People with COVID-19 can have a wide range of symptoms, ranging from mild symptoms to severe illness. Symptoms may appear 2–14 days after exposure to the virus. The “primary” COVID-19 symptoms require exclusion from school. The “non-primary” COVID-19 symptoms can be seen with many other illnesses, in addition to COVID-19. The non-primary symptoms do not always require exclusion. When feasible, ill students and staff with any primary COVID-19 symptoms should be encouraged to seek viral testing. If a student has non-primary symptoms that persist for more than one day, the parent should consider evaluation by the child’s healthcare provider who can determine if viral testing is advised. If a staff member has non-primary symptoms that persist for more than one day, the staff member should consider evaluation by their healthcare provider who can determine if viral testing is advised.

Primary COVID-19 symptoms:

- Cough
- Temperature of 100.4^o F or higher *or chills*
- Shortness of breath *or difficulty breathing*
- New loss of taste or smell

Non-primary COVID-19 symptoms:

- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- Sore throat
- Nasal congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

Scenarios

The following table summarizes the scenarios in the tables that follow.

Click on the underlined scenario number to go to the scenario table that describes actions required by involved persons.

Scenario	Description
<u>Scenario 1</u>	A student or staff member <i>at increased risk of severe COVID-19</i> has been exposed to a person with confirmed COVID-19 in a K–12 indoor setting. The student or staff member is <u>not</u> currently showing symptoms.
<u>Scenario 2</u>	A student or staff member becomes ill with primary COVID-19 symptoms (cough, temperature of 100.4 °F or higher <i>or</i> chills, shortness of breath <i>or</i> difficulty breathing, or new loss of taste or smell).
<u>Scenario 3</u>	An ill student or staff member with primary COVID-19 symptoms has a negative COVID-19 viral test.
<u>Scenario 4a</u>	An ill student or staff member has not been tested with a COVID-19 viral test.
<u>Scenario 4b</u>	An ill student or staff member with primary COVID-19 symptoms has not been tested with a COVID-19 viral test, and a clear <u>non-respiratory diagnosis is identified</u> as the cause of illness.
<u>Scenario 5</u>	One <i>or more people</i> within the same cohort have positive COVID-19 viral tests within 14 days

Scenario 1. A student or staff member *at increased risk of severe COVID-19* has been **exposed to a person with confirmed COVID-19** in a K–12 indoor setting. The student or staff member is not currently showing symptoms.

Involved persons	Action
School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Record the date school became aware of the exposure. In this situation, the <i>cohort is</i> eligible for “test to stay <i>enhanced exposure testing</i>”. Please refer to the Oregon’s COVID-19 Testing in K-12 schools webpage for Diagnostic Testing <i>Guidance</i> and FAQs for more details.
Exposed person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Students and staff participating in test to stay enhanced exposure testing are allowed to attend school and school-related extracurricular activities during their testing period. Testing is optional.</i> If exposed person develops primary COVID-19 symptoms, see Scenario 2.
Household members, including siblings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Offer COVID-19 Support Hotline if a family has questions</i>

Scenario 2. A student or staff member **becomes ill** with primary COVID-19 symptoms (cough, temperature of 100.4°F or higher *or* chills, shortness of breath *or* difficulty breathing, or new loss of taste or smell).

Involved persons	Action
School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If student or staff member is currently on school grounds: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Isolate ill person following RSSL 1i. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Offer COVID-19 testing at school if available. ▪ Send ill person home. ● Record the symptoms reported or observed, and the date school became aware and excluded the individual. ● Student should be offered remote instruction while isolated.
Ill person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Seek COVID-19 testing. If individual does not have a healthcare provider and needs assistance finding a testing site, use the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) testing map to find the closest testing location: https://govstatus.egov.com/or-oha-covid-19-testing or call 211. ● If the ill person has a negative COVID-19 viral test, see Scenario 3. ● If the ill person has not been tested for COVID-19, see Scenario 4a. ● If the ill person has a positive COVID-19 viral test, see Scenario 5.
Household members, including siblings (if ill person is a student)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Household members may continue school attendance as long as they remain healthy.</i> ● <i>Offer COVID-19 Support Hotline if a family has questions or needs support.</i>

Scenario 3. An ill student or staff member with primary COVID-19 symptoms (cough, temperature of 100.4 °F or higher *or* chills, shortness of breath *or* difficulty breathing, or new loss of taste or smell) has a **negative** COVID-19 viral test.

Involved persons	Action
School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send individual home (if not home already). • Student should be offered remote instruction while excluded.
Ill person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ill person should <i>rest</i> at home until 24 hours after fever is resolved, without use of fever-reducing medicine and other symptoms are improving.
Household members, including siblings (if ill person is a student)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Household members may continue school attendance as long as they remain healthy.</i>

Scenario 4a. An ill student or staff member **has not been tested** with a COVID-19 viral test.

Involved persons	Action
School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If ill student or staff member is currently on school grounds: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Offer COVID-19 testing if available. ○ Send individual home. ● <i>If the ill person has one primary COVID-19 symptom, exclude* from school until 24 hours after fever is resolved, without use of fever-reducing medicine, and other symptoms are improving.</i> ● <i>If the ill person has two or more primary COVID-19 symptoms, exclude from school for five days and until 24 hours after fever is resolved, without use of fever-reducing medicine, and other symptoms are improving.</i> ● Student should be offered remote instruction while excluded.
Ill person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Seek testing if ill with any COVID-19 symptoms. Many schools are offering COVID-19 testing. If individual does not have a health care provider and needs assistance finding a testing site, use the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) testing map to find the closest testing location or call 211. Once test result is obtained, this scenario no longer applies; refer to appropriate scenario based on the result. ● <i>If the ill person has one primary COVID-19 symptom, they should stay home from school until 24 hours after fever is resolved, without use of fever-reducing medicine, and other symptoms are improving.</i> ● <i>If the ill person has two or more primary COVID-19 symptoms, they should stay home for five days and until 24 hours after fever is resolved, without use of fever-reducing medicine, and other symptoms are improving.</i> ● If the ill person has no primary COVID-19 symptoms, then usual disease-specific return-to-school guidance should be followed.
Household members, including siblings (if ill person is a student)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All household members may continue school attendance <i>as long as they remain healthy.</i>

* Note that school **exclusion** in this scenario is distinct from general **isolation** requirements of public health.

Scenario 4b. An ill student or staff member with primary COVID-19 symptoms (cough, temperature of 100.4 °F or higher *or* chills, shortness of breath *or* difficulty breathing, or new loss of taste or smell) **has not been tested** with a COVID-19 viral test, and a clear non-respiratory diagnosis is identified as the cause of illness.

Involved persons	Action
School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If student or staff member is currently on school grounds: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Offer COVID-19 testing if available. ○ Send individual home. ● Student should be offered remote instruction while excluded.
Ill person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Seek testing. COVID-19 is possible despite alternative diagnosis. Many schools are offering COVID-19 testing. If individual does not have a health care provider and needs assistance finding a testing site, use the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) testing map to find the closest testing location: https://govstatus.egov.com/or-oha-covid-19-testing or call 211. Once test result is obtained, this scenario no longer applies; refer to appropriate scenario based on the result. ● Because a clear alternative non-respiratory diagnosis is identified by a healthcare provider as the cause of the person’s illness (e.g., a positive urine culture in a child with fever), then usual disease-specific return-to-school guidance should be followed.
Household members, including siblings (if ill person is a student)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All household members may continue school attendance <i>as long as they remain healthy.</i>

Scenario 5. *One or more people* within same cohort have **positive** COVID-19 viral tests within 14 days

Involved persons	Action
School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Send student(s)/staff home if not already isolated outside the school setting. ● Use Common Communication protocol to notify class/cohort/staff <i>of COVID-19 case(s)</i>. ● Document on cohort logs <i>positive test date</i>. ● Provide cohort logs to LPHA <i>upon request</i>. ● Student(s) should be offered remote instruction while isolated. ● <i>Report unusual absenteeism to the LPHA.</i>
Ill person(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Isolate at home for <i>5</i> days after symptoms first appeared and until 24 hours after fever is resolved, without use of fever-reducing medicine, and other symptoms are improving. If no COVID-19 symptoms, then isolate at home for <i>5</i> days after positive test. ● A negative viral COVID-19 test is not needed for return to school. ● <i>Wear a well-fitting mask during all activities for 10 days (5 days during isolation and 5 days after).</i>
School District Superintendent or Executive Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use Common Communication protocol when communicating decision to the cohort.
Household members, including siblings (if ill person is a student)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Household members may continue school attendance as long as they remain healthy.</i> ● <i>Offer <u>COVID-19 Support Hotline</u> if a family has questions or needs support.</i>

Terms to Know

Term	Definition
Community spread	When people have been infected with the virus in an area and some are not sure how or where they became infected.
Confirmed case	Individual who tests positive using an FDA Emergency Use Authorized (EUA) diagnostic (viral) test.
Coronavirus	A large family of viruses that are common in people and many different species of animals.
COVID-19	Abbreviation for the coronavirus diseases 2019, a disease caused by a novel (or new) coronavirus called SARS-CoV-2 that has not previously been seen in humans.
Epidemic	Affecting or tending to affect a disproportionately large number of individuals within a population, community or region at the same time.
Exclusion	Keeping a student with certain contagious diseases or symptoms out of school to prevent possible disease spread. Determined by school administrator.
Exposed (close contact)	Having been within 6 feet of a confirmed or presumptive COVID-19 case for 15 minutes or more within one day, or having been in contact with the infectious secretions of a confirmed or presumptive COVID-19 case.
Isolation	Separates people with a contagious disease from other people to prevent disease spread. Determined by LPHA.
LPHA	Local public health authority: a county government, health district or an intergovernmental entity that provides public health services. Directory of Oregon LPHAs.
Outbreak	For the purposes of this document, an outbreak is two or more COVID-19 cases occurring in the same cohort (linked by time and place) in people from different households, suggesting viral spread within the cohort.
Pandemic	Occurring over a wide geographic area and affecting an exceptionally high proportion of the population.

Physical distancing	Measures intended to limit the movement of people in order to interrupt the transmission of infectious, contagious diseases.
Quarantine	Separates and restricts the movement of people who were exposed to a contagious disease to monitor whether they become sick and prevent disease spread.
Viral test	A test for the presence of an active viral infection (e.g., a PCR test or an antigen test). Antibody tests are not viral tests.