

# Lancaster County School District COVID Guidance

SC DHEC guidance is intended for K-12 schools to plan their response to known and possible cases of COVID-19 as well as known contacts. The guidelines are based on what is currently known about COVID-19.

The virus that causes COVID-19 is thought to spread mainly from person to person, mainly through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, talks, exercises, or sings. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of nearby people or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.

## **Prevention Strategies to Reduce Transmission of COVID-19 in Schools**

These COVID-19 prevention strategies remain critical to protecting students, parents, teachers, and staff. Schools will have a mixed population of both people who are fully vaccinated and people who are not fully vaccinated. Steps must be taken to protect all students and staff from COVID-19 and limit the spread of the virus.

- Vaccination
- Mask use
- Physical distancing
- Contact tracing, in combination with isolation and quarantine
- Staying home when sick and getting tested
- Handwashing and respiratory etiquette
- Cleaning and disinfection

The CDC and SC DHEC strongly recommend mask use for all people indoors in school settings, especially when physical distancing is impossible. ***The Lancaster County School District strongly encourages all students and staff to wear masks at all times while in a school or district facility.***

While the district is not changing the current mask optional policy, we strongly recommend mask-wearing following the CDC and SC DHEC guidance. ***Masks will also be available for all students and staff desiring to wear one.*** In many cases, if both parties are wearing a mask, students can avoid most quarantines. **If students are at least 3 feet apart, then only the student who has tested positive would be required to isolate IF the student who was 3 feet or more apart was wearing a mask.**

## **Symptomatic Individuals**

### **Individuals with symptoms of COVID-19 (but no known exposures to COVID-19)**

Individuals will be excluded from school if they have any of the following with or without fever:

- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing -or –
- Loss of taste or smell -or –
- New or worsening cough

This is not a complete list of all symptoms of COVID-19. Other symptoms may include fever, chills, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, sore throat, congestion or runny nose,

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nausea/vomiting, or diarrhea. A person can spread the virus up to two (2) days before they have any symptoms, but many COVID-19 cases show no symptoms at all.

## **VERY IMPORTANT:**

- If your child **or** someone in the home has **symptoms of COVID-19**, do not send your child to school.
- If your child **or** someone in the house is **waiting on results from a COVID-19 test**, do not send your child to school.
- If your child **or** someone in the home has **tested positive for COVID-19**, do not send your child to school.
- Contact your child's teacher or your school nurse.

## **Individuals Who Test Positive**

All individuals who test positive with COVID-19 must isolate.

## **Positive COVID-19 Individual-Criteria for Return:**

- Asymptomatic students or staff with a positive viral test (positive PCR or antigen test, not antibody test) can return to school on the 6th day after specimen collection
- Students must provide a parent note stating the child is symptom and fever free for 24 hours without using fever reducing medication. The self-certification form will be used for the parent note.
- In the above situation, students and staff can return to school and wear a mask on days 6-10

A person who has symptoms of COVID-19, but has received a negative test for COVID-19 or has visited a health care provider and received an alternate diagnosis that would explain the symptoms of COVID-19, may return to school when they meet return criteria, per DHEC exclusion list and:

- It has been at least 24 hours since the person had a fever (without using fever-reducing medicine);  
AND
- They have felt well for 24-hours.

## **Close Contact**

DHEC defines close contact among students and staff in the K-12 setting as those individuals not maximally vaccinated who are within 6 feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period from 48 hours before symptom onset (or specimen collection for an asymptomatic infected person) until the infected person meets criteria for release from isolation.

- The close contact definition would exclude students within 3 to 6 feet of an infected student (laboratory-confirmed or a clinically compatible illness) **if the exposed student wore a mask** during the exposure time.

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- This exception does not apply to teachers, staff, or other adults in the indoor classroom setting.
- That means that “close contact” distance for a student can be reduced for students from 6 feet to 3 feet IF the exposed student wore a mask during the exposure time.

The standard CDC definition of close contact (less than 6 feet apart, regardless of mask use, for a total of 15 minutes or more) applies to all adults and students, not maximally vaccinated, including teachers, staff, or other adults in the school setting, other than the exclusion listed about for students.

## QUARANTINE GUIDANCE

Individuals will be excluded from school if identified as being in close contact with an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19 two (2) days (24-48 hours) before the onset of symptoms (or date of test collection if no symptoms).

Quarantine is required for an individual who has been a close contact with someone who is determined positive with COVID-19 either through testing or symptom consistent diagnosis, with the following two exceptions:

- If a close contact is maximally vaccinated – maximally vaccinated is defined as an individual who has received all of the vaccine doses they're eligible for (completed initial vaccination series *and* booster for those eligible by age and time since initial series- see CDC [website](#) for most up-to-date information on booster eligibility) or are verified (positive PCR or antigen test, not antibody test) to have been infected with COVID-19 in the previous 90 days, they do not have to quarantine for any length of time. DHEC recommends they get tested on Day 5 even if they do not have symptoms, and they **must** wear a mask for 10 days.
- **Individuals who are maximally vaccinated and do not have symptoms do NOT need to quarantine after a close contact.** *Maximally vaccinated does include receiving booster, if eligible.*
- People who have tested positive (PCR or antigen test administered by a medical professional) for COVID-19 within the past 90 days and recovered and do not have symptoms do NOT need to quarantine.

**The CDC and SC DHEC recommend quarantine for 10 days after the last exposure.** However, the CDC and SC DHEC offer a new 5-day option to reduce the duration of quarantine.

### **5-day Option:**

**A close contact who is ending quarantine on the 6<sup>th</sup> day and returning to the school environment must do the following for days 6 through 10:**

- 1. Provide proof of a negative COVID test administered by a medical professional no earlier than the 4<sup>th</sup> day since the last exposure to a positive individual.**
  - a. A PCR test is encouraged but not required. An antigen test would be accepted.**
  - b. We encourage the PCR test because it is the most accurate for individuals not showing significant symptoms.**

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- c. If the student or employee is returning from a quarantine early, they are doing so because they are NOT experiencing symptoms. The antigen test would be less accurate in these circumstances where symptoms are not present and recommend a PCR (long) test.
  - d. At home, tests *will not* be accepted.
2. **Wear a mask\*\* over both the nose and mouth for the remaining days of the 10-day quarantine while at all Lancaster County School District Facilities and/or events**
3. **Must follow physical distancing guidelines,**
4. **Continue to daily monitor symptoms and**
5. **if symptoms develop, notify the school and not report.**

*A close contact who ends quarantine early (less than 10-days) and returns to the school environment must wear a mask\*\* and follow physical distancing guidelines to return to in person learning. This does not represent a mask mandate but instead provides an option to reduce the quarantine within the guidelines provided by SC DHEC. The individual must continue to monitor for symptoms 10 days after the date of last exposure.*

**\*\*If a student is found not to be wearing a mask over both the nose and mouth for the remaining days of the 10-day quarantine while at all Lancaster County School District Facilities and/or events, that student will be sent home to complete their quarantine and will be able to return on day 11.**

**Household close contact:** If the child or staff member lives in the same household as a positive individual, their quarantine period begins on the date their household member has been cleared from their isolation period. The household contact would complete the positive individual's isolation (either 5-days or 10-day) and the additional 5-day or 10-day quarantine for a total of 10-days or 15-days.

The Lancaster County School District will provide the CDC/SC DHEC options to employees and students to reduce the duration of quarantine to 15-days or 10-days if the first ten (10) or fifteen (15) days of quarantine have been completed and has been no additional exposure and no symptoms have been reported during daily at-home monitoring.

## **10-day Option:**

**A close contact who is ending quarantine on the 10<sup>th</sup> day and returning to the school environment must do the following for days 11 through 15:**

2. **Provide proof of a negative COVID test administered by a medical professional no earlier than the 9<sup>th</sup> day of the total quarantine.**
  - a. **A PCR test is encouraged but not required. An antigen test would be accepted.**
  - b. We encourage the PCR test because it is the most accurate for individuals not showing significant symptoms.
  - c. If the student or employee is returning from a quarantine early, they are doing so because they are NOT experiencing symptoms. The antigen test would be less accurate in these circumstances where symptoms are not present and recommend a PCR (long) test.
  - d. At-home tests will not be accepted.

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3. Wear a mask\*\* over both the nose and mouth for the remaining days of the 15-day quarantine while at all Lancaster County School District Facilities and/or events
4. Must follow physical distancing guidelines,
5. Continue to daily monitor symptoms and
6. if symptoms develop, notify the school and not report.

**\*\*If a student is found not to be wearing a mask over both the nose and mouth for the remaining days of the 15-day quarantine while at all Lancaster County School District Facilities and/or events, that student will be sent home to complete their quarantine and will be able to return on day 16.**

If an individual plans to utilize the 5-day quarantine option, we **suggest scheduling a COVID-19 PCR test for day 4** as soon as they learn of their close contact status. Please contact your medical provider early to schedule the test. Schedule the PCR test on at least day 4, but we would suggest day 5 or 6. *Due to the time needed to secure a testing appointment, we recommend contacting your medical provider immediately when you are notified and scheduling your appointment in advance on day 5 for a PCR test for COVID-19.*

A person who is **not maximally vaccinated** and has been in close contact with someone with COVID-19 can return to school after completing the specified quarantine. The quarantine begins after the last known close contact with the COVID-19 positive individual.

A person who is **maximally vaccinated** and does not have any symptoms after a close contact with someone with COVID-19 does not need to quarantine if they voluntarily choose to provide documentation of their maximum vaccination status to eliminate the need for quarantine. It is recommended they get tested 3-5 days after exposure. They must wear a mask at school until 10 days after exposure or receive a negative test result.

**Staff and students (ages 16+) must receive a COVID booster to remain maximally vaccinated if outside of the following time frames:**

- Moderna Vaccine- if primary series finished more than 6 months ago
- Pfizer Vaccine- if primary series finished more than 5 months ago
- J & J Vaccine- if vaccine received more than 2 months ago

A person who has tested positive ((PCR or antigen test administered by a medical professional) for COVID-19 in the last 3 months and does not have symptoms after a close contact with someone with COVID-19 **must** wear a mask at all times while in the school, monitor for symptoms daily and throughout the day, practice social distancing to the extent possible, practice good hand hygiene, and clean frequently touched surfaces often until 10 days after exposure.

A person who has been in close contact with someone with COVID-19, who develops symptoms while in quarantine and has no other alternate diagnosis to explain the symptoms can return to school when

- It has been 5 days since the first day of symptoms;
- AND

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- It has been at least 24 hours since the person had a fever (without using fever-reducing medicine);  
AND
- Other symptoms of COVID-19 are improving.
- Masks must be worn days 6-10

\*\*This applies to vaccinated or unvaccinated individuals.

**At-home self-testing for COVID-19:** The LCSD will not accept results from at-home/over-the-counter self-tests due to the possibility of improper specimen collection by the individual and misinterpretation of the result by non-medical personnel.

**Antibody testing** demonstrating the presence of antibodies is not currently accepted as a means to avoid quarantine.

- The CDC has not yet determined a way to know the level of immunity represented by the presence of antibodies.
- SC DHEC follows CDC guidance and advises that antibody tests should not be used to determine if someone is immune or protected against infection with the virus that causes COVID-19.
- **The presence of antibodies is not currently accepted as a means to avoid quarantine.**
- A positive antibody test does not rule out the possibility of re-infection.

## Athletics/Activities\*

- Close contacts will include anyone who was within 6 feet of an infected person 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 before symptom onset (or specimen collection for an asymptomatic infected person) of the infected person.
- Investigators need to consider the total time spent together during the infectious period to determine who may be a close contact. This includes time on the bus, bench, locker room, field/court/arena, etc., unless it is known that they were unlikely to be in close proximity of each other.
- **Athlete Close Contacts:** Athletes who are deemed close contacts would be able to return to the academic setting based on the 10-day or 5-day quarantine guidance but would not be allowed to return to athletic participation until completing the 10-day quarantine.
  - Athletes could return to full participation in practice and competition on day 11.
  - Athletes **might** return to independent conditioning activities on day 6:
    - **IF** they maintain 6 feet or more of physical distance from other students and staff
    - **AND** wear a mask at all times on days 6 through 10.
  - If the entire team or a large portion of the team is returning early, then independent conditioning activities would not be possible with many individuals. In this circumstance, practice and competition would begin again on day 11.

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**Athlete Household close contact:** If the athlete lives in the same household as a positive individual, their quarantine period begins on the date their household member has been cleared from their isolation period. The athlete, who is a household contact, would complete the positive individual's isolation (usually 5 or 10 days) and the additional 5-day or 10-day quarantine for a total of 10-day or 15-days. Athletes who are deemed household close contacts would be able to return to the academic setting based on the 10-day or 15-day quarantine guidance but would not be allowed to return to athletic participation until completing the 15-day quarantine.

- Athletes who are household close contacts could return to full participation in practice and competition on day 16.
- Athletes **might** return to independent conditioning activities on day 11:
  - **IF** they maintain 6 feet or more of physical distance from other students and staff
  - **AND** wear a mask at all times on days 11 through 15.
- These guidelines are in place because, during practice and athletic events, individuals returning from quarantine early would not meet the masking and social distancing requirements while participating in physical activities and sporting events.
- If allowed to participate fully before finishing quarantine and if that student tests positive, their full participation would mean the entire team would most likely be close contacts and have to quarantine. This would result in missed games and could jeopardize the entire team's season.
- Maximally vaccinated athletes who do not have any symptoms after a close contact with someone with COVID-19 do not need to quarantine if they voluntarily choose to provide documentation of their full vaccination status to eliminate the need for quarantine. It is recommended they get tested 3-5 days after exposure. They must wear a mask at practice and in competition until 10 days after exposure or receive a negative test result.
- An athlete who has tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 3 months and does not have symptoms after a close contact with someone with COVID-19 **must** wear a mask at all times while in practice and competition, monitor for symptoms daily and throughout the day, practice social distancing to the extent possible, practice good hand hygiene, and clean frequently touched surfaces often until 10 days after exposure.

\*Activities where forced expiration produces increased respiratory droplets in the surroundings, including shouting, singing, physical exertion, etc.

## Notifications

Please note that going forward, you may receive close contact notifications or an abundance of caution notifications through the electronic call/email system. Please make sure that your phone number and email address are updated in your student's PowerSchool account. If you have questions after receiving an automated message from the calling system, please contact the front office at your child's school.

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## Continuing Instruction During COVID Absences

If a student is home on isolation or quarantine, please communicate with the student's teacher(s) and obtain the link to Google Meet and schedule to log in to the class for critical parts of the classroom instruction or access recordings of classroom instruction. In addition, the student will be able to access assignments through Google Classroom.

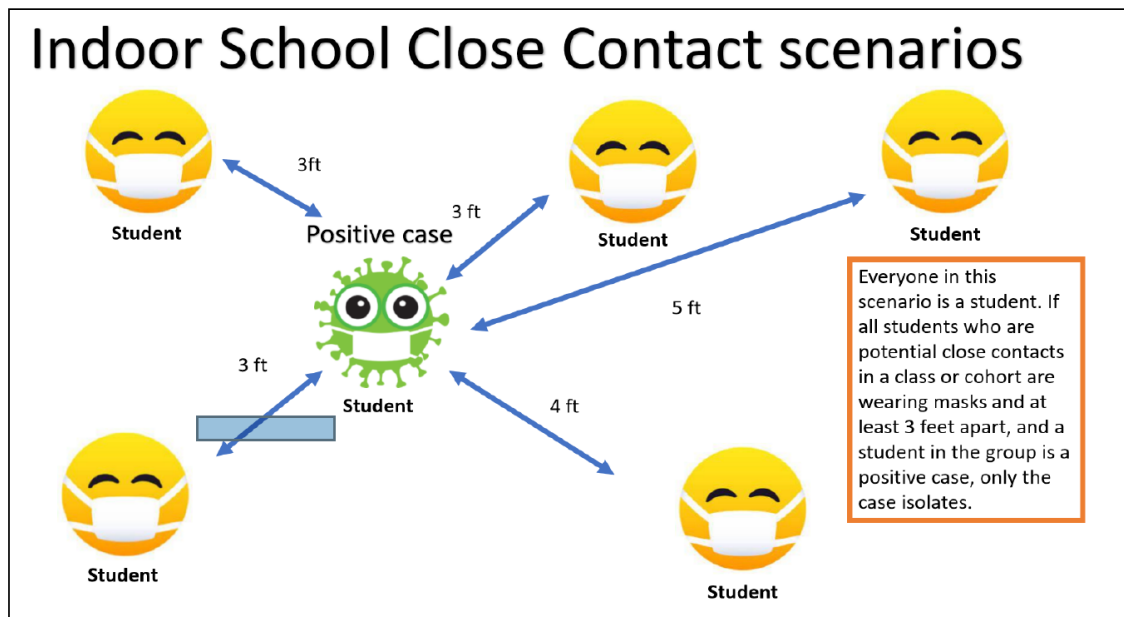
## Travel outside the United States

Quarantine is required for an individual who has traveled outside the United States, with the following two exceptions:

- Individuals who are fully vaccinated and do not have symptoms do NOT need to quarantine after travel outside the United States.
- People who have tested positive (PCR or antigen test administered by a medical professional) for COVID-19 within the past 90 days and recovered and do not have symptoms do NOT need to quarantine.

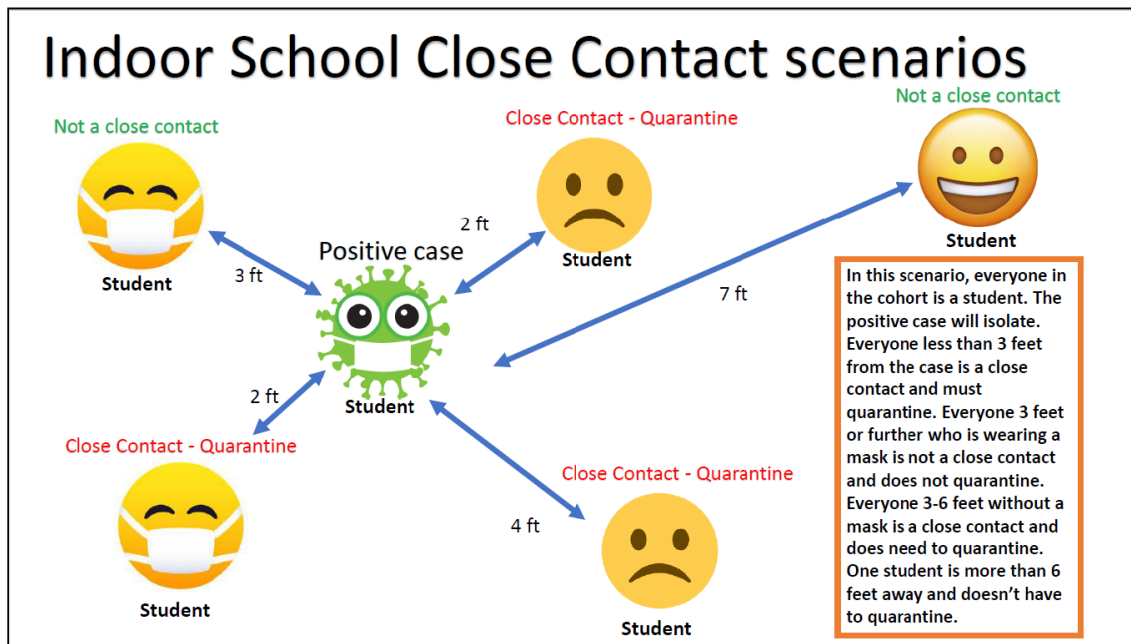
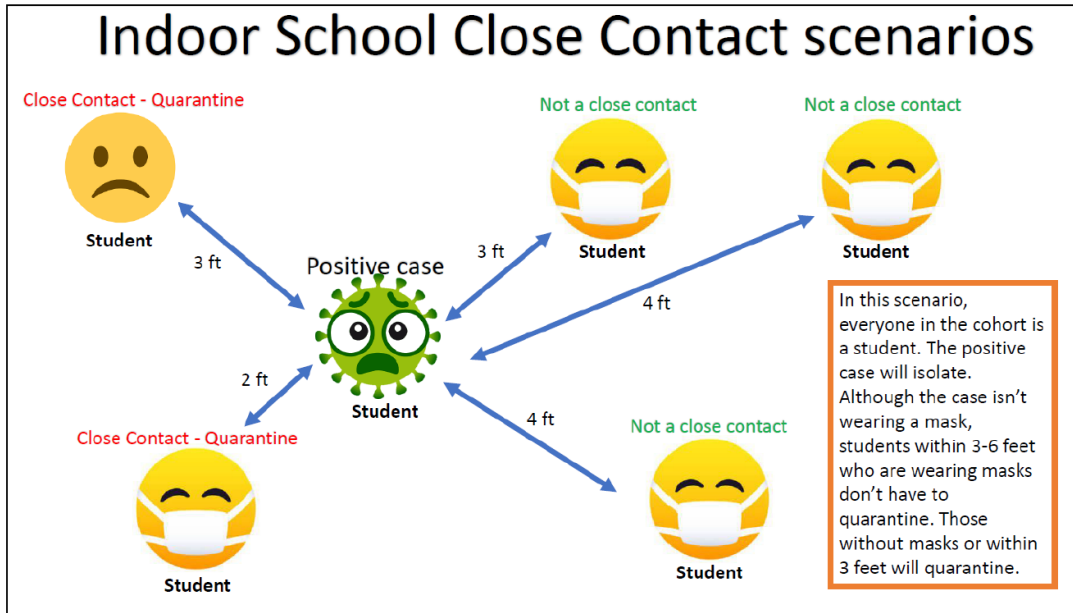
Upon returning to the United States, individuals who travel outside the United States will be excluded from school following the same guidelines as if being in close contact with an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19, and may follow the 10-day or 5-day guidance as listed above for close contacts.

**Please note:** If an individual has symptoms and tests positive the days of isolation will be measured from the onset of symptoms date. If an individual does not have symptoms and tests positive then the days of isolation will be measure from the collection date.





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