



## 2021-2022 School Year FAQ's

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### **Are schools required to report cases for the 2021-2022 school year?**

Yes. Schools will continue to report all cases and contacts (regardless of vaccination status) in accordance with IC 16-41-2-2 to the local health department (LHD) through the CROSS database. The LHD will then report that information into the Indiana Department of Health (IDOH) K-12 Portal on behalf of the schools. Link to the latest School Guidance Document from the Indiana Department of Health (7/2021):

<https://www.coronavirus.in.gov/files/updated%20school%20guidance%207.19.21.pdf>

### **Are schools required to conduct contact tracing for the 2021-2022 school year?**

Yes. Indiana code (IC 16-41-2-2) requires all confirmed cases of COVID-19 be reported to local health officials within 24 hours. For outbreak control measures in schools, the code states that schools shall do the following:

- Conduct an inquiry into absenteeism to determine the existence of any other cases
- Immediately report the confirmed case or cases to the LHD
- Send a notice home with each student, attendee, or employee who is required to isolate or quarantine that the student or employee shall be excluded from the date of the letter until the appropriate isolation or quarantine period has ended.

### **How do we determine the infectious period of a positively diagnosed case of COVID-19?**

If the person was symptomatic, the infectious period is determined by counting back 2 full days before symptoms started and then goes through 10 full days after symptoms started. *Example: if a person develops symptoms on August 3, their infectious period starts August 1, will end on August 13, and they are released from isolation on August 14.*

If the person was asymptomatic, the infectious period is determined by counting back 2 full days before the test was collected and then goes through 10 full days after the test was collected.

*Example: if a person was tested on August 3, the infectious period would begin August 1, will end August 13 and they are released from isolation on August 14.*

### **What constitutes a high-risk close contact in schools?**

Anyone within 6 feet of a confirmed case for 15 cumulative minutes or more is considered a high-risk close contact. Contact tracing can be done at 3 feet in the classroom environment if everyone in the class is masked at all times and seated facing forward at least 3 feet apart.

### **Is a fully vaccinated person required to quarantine?**

A person is considered fully vaccinated if it has been 2 weeks from the last dose of the vaccine in a 2-dose series, or 2 weeks from the only dose in a 1-dose series. If you identify contacts during contact tracing who meet these criteria, they are not required to quarantine as long as they remain asymptomatic. Fully vaccinated contacts are allowed to return to school during the quarantine period if they are asymptomatic, but they must wear a mask for the 14-day period. The CDC guidance states a fully vaccinated person can get tested on days 3-5 with a PCR test and are no longer required to mask for the remaining days of the quarantine period if those results are negative.

**What if a person has already had COVID-19, are they required to quarantine after an exposure?**

If a person is within 90 days of a confirmed COVID-19 infection and they are asymptomatic, they are not required to quarantine after an exposure.

**Can I show proof of a positive antibody test to avoid quarantine?**

No. At this time, antibody tests are not accepted as proof of immunity. The only way to avoid quarantine is to show proof of completed vaccination or proof of previous positive COVID-19 test within the past 90 days.

**What if a person reports a positive test conducted in the home?**

There are several home rapid test kits that can be purchased over the counter. These home tests are not reported to the health department like laboratory tests, and cannot be verified as far as technique nor how they were administered like in a testing facility, and are therefore not included in the daily or overall case numbers in the state of Indiana. Since there is no way to verify the validity of the test, our recommendation is not to accept these as confirmed cases in the school environment at this time. If a parent calls and states their child has tested positive on a rapid test at home, our recommendation is to keep the child home and encourage the family to have the child tested at an official testing facility. Once the official report of a positive test is available, then all appropriate contact tracing can be done at that time. Negative results from home test kits also cannot be used to allow a child to return from quarantine early.

**What are the current quarantine options?**

- Quarantine through day 7, return on day 8 – Person must be asymptomatic and receive a negative test (either a PCR or rapid test from an official testing site) on days 5-8. The contact must follow enhanced precautions\* while at school days 8-14.
- Quarantine through day 10, return on day 11 – Person must be asymptomatic through day 10 (and remain that way) and follow enhanced precautions\* while at school days 11-14.
- Traditional 14-day quarantine – Person may return on day 15 with no precautions.

*\*Enhanced precautions include: masking at all times (except while eating and drinking), keeping a distance of 6 feet from others at all times, frequent hand-washing and self-monitoring for symptoms.*

**Will the health department provide all these date options (return on day 8, 11, 14) to the school for each student when conducting contract tracing?**

No. The health department will notify the school of the exclusion dates for the child, and will only include information for the traditional 14-day quarantine. If the school is allowing an early return utilizing enhanced precautions, the school will need to collect the necessary information (symptoms, test results) and adjust the date accordingly for the child.

**Can a school access COVID-19 vaccine information in CHIRP?**

According to IDOH, CHIRP may only be accessed in accordance with IC 16-38-5-3. Elementary and secondary schools are authorized by Indiana Code to access CHIRP for individuals who *attend* the school. Providers, which includes nurses, may also access CHIRP, but they should only be accessing information for individuals for whom they have provider/patient relationship (students). Schools should not access CHIRP to obtain the vaccination status of any staff, volunteers or vendors at the school because it is not authorized by IC 16-38-5-3 and would violate the privacy laws. School employees may choose to allow the school nurse to access these records by signing a consent.

### **Will the health department provide vaccination information for contacts on the daily exclusion list sent from the health department each day?**

The health department cannot legally share COVID-19 vaccination information with the schools without permission. If the vaccination information is included in the information for the contact submitted by the school in CROSS that information will be reflected on the daily exclusion list. If that information is NOT provided in CROSS by the reporting school, then no vaccination information will be included in the daily exclusion list. It will be the school's responsibility to collect that information and adjust the exclusion list accordingly.

### **Has the illness policy for schools changed since last year?**

No. If a person reports symptom consistent with COVID-19, regardless of vaccination status, they should stay home until one of the following has occurred:

- The person has a negative PCR test result
- The person has a doctor's note clearing them to return
- The person has completed a 10-day isolation period and meets all other criteria to return

### **What symptoms should we screen for?**

Fever (100.4 or higher), chills, sore throat, cough, shortness of breath, diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, headache and new loss of taste or smell.

### **Are masks required in schools?**

Masks are strongly recommended for anyone in a school, regardless of vaccination status. This is not currently a requirement in the state of Indiana nor in Allen County and is a decision made individually by each school board. Here is a link to the current CDC guidance on masking of vaccinated people: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated-guidance.html>

### **Are masks required on school buses?**

Per the Department of Transportation (DOT) order, individuals are required to wear masks on public transportation, including school buses, even if fully vaccinated.

### **Overall, what has changed from last year?**

- The state mask mandate has been lifted by the Governor and it is now the responsibility of the local school board to determine the mask policy for each school/district.
- Fully vaccinated individuals are no longer required to quarantine if they remain asymptomatic. They can return to school after an exposure but the CDC recommends they mask for 14-days from the exposure unless they get tested on days 3-5 after the exposure and are negative.
- If a school is choosing to be mask optional, the 3 feet contact tracing guideline to identify contacts would no longer apply. Mask optional schools will need to contact trace all contacts within 6 feet.
- When reporting cases in CROSS, there are now boxes to mark the vaccination status of both the cases and contacts identified. These boxes are not required and should not delay timely reporting of the case. Please only submit vaccination information if you have it at the time of reporting.