



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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Response to a Laboratory Confirmed Case of COVID-19 and Persons with COVID-19-like Illness in Schools

Updated July 23, 2020

This guidance accompanies the *“Decision Aid: Exclusion and Return for Laboratory Confirmed COVID-19 Cases and Persons with COVID-19-like Illness in Schools, Child Care Programs, and Youth Camps.”*

This guidance applies to persons with a laboratory **confirmed case of COVID-19, regardless of whether they have symptoms**, and persons with COVID-19-like illness. Exclusion, quarantine and return to school for a person with laboratory confirmed COVID-19 or persons with symptoms of COVID-19-like illness is based on CDC and Maryland Department of Health/Maryland State Department of Education guidance and is to be implemented by local school systems in collaboration with the local health department.

For the purposes of this guidance, COVID-19-like illness is defined as:

1. New onset cough or shortness of breath; **OR**
2. **At least 2 of the following:** fever of 100.4° or higher, chills, shivering, muscle pain, sore throat, headache, loss of sense of taste or smell, or gastrointestinal symptoms (nausea, vomiting or diarrhea).

NOTE: This definition was adapted from the clinical criteria in the [CDC case definition of a probable case of COVID-19](#).

The guidance below is meant to supplement, where necessary, current communicable disease outbreak investigation processes, current school health services illness management processes, and current local health department COVID-19 response processes. The guidance below is designed to expedite notification, isolation, and quarantine of school staff and/or students, as indicated, when a person notifies the school they/their child has a laboratory confirmed case of COVID-19, regardless of whether the person has symptoms, or exhibits symptoms of COVID-19-like illness. The specific processes to implement this guidance within each school system are to be developed and carried out as a collaboration between the local school system and the local health department.

1. Communication

- a. School systems should develop processes to inform staff and parents that they are expected to notify the school as soon as they are made aware that they/their child has tested positive for the virus that causes COVID-19 or that they/their child has been exposed to a person who is confirmed to have COVID-19;
- b. School systems should communicate to parents the expectation that ill students **MUST** be picked up within a specified period of time;
- c. The school should have a plan for how parents are to notify the school of a positive test result or exposure to ensure confidentiality;
- d. Schools should have a plan to collaborate and coordinate with the local health department regarding school contact tracing procedures including determining the role of the school nurse, the school administrator, and the local health department; and
- e. The school system should develop communication templates for notification of contacts of persons who are confirmed to have COVID-19.

2. Notification of contacts who must quarantine

- a. The local health department should lead the process of contact tracing;
- b. The school should work with the local health department to identify persons who may have had close contact with the person testing positive for COVID-19;
- c. Schools should provide written notification to all identified contacts. The notification should include the following:
 - i. When to seek medical care
 - ii. How to monitor for symptoms
 - iii. Who to contact and how to contact them if they develop symptoms of COVID-19 while under quarantine
 - iv. The projected length of quarantine if they remain asymptomatic
 - v. Plan for maintaining remote learning for those who remain well enough to engage in learning while under quarantine
 - vi. Information about local COVID-19 testing sites

3. Isolation, Exclusion, Quarantine, and Return to School

- a. If a student or school staff member develops symptoms of COVID-19-like illness **during the school day**, the school should:
 - i. Safely isolate the person in the designated isolation area and place a surgical mask on the person if they are not wearing a cloth face covering as appropriate;
 - ii. The SHS staff member should don the appropriate PPE and conduct the appropriate determination of the student's condition based on presenting symptoms;
 - iii. Begin the process for the person to vacate the school as soon as possible;

- b. When a school is informed of a laboratory confirmed case of COVID-19 in a student or school staff member, regardless of whether the person has symptoms, the school should begin the process for identifying close contacts and begin the notification process in collaboration with the local health department;
- c. The school should follow the “Decision Aid: Exclusion and Return for Laboratory Confirmed COVID-19 Cases and Persons with COVID-19-like Illness in Schools, Child Care Programs, and Youth Camps” (see attachment) for a person with a positive test for COVID-19 or who has COVID-19 like illness, regardless if they have been tested, and those who had close contact with the person with COVID-19 or COVID-19-like illness;
- d. The school should also follow the instructions from the local health department for all matters regarding quarantine, exclusion and return to school for a person with a positive test for COVID-19 or who has COVID-19-like illness, and those who had close contact with the person with COVID-19 or COVID-19-like illness; and
- e. If the number of laboratory confirmed cases of COVID-19 or persons with COVID-19-like illness meets the definition of an outbreak, the response decisions, including possible school closure, will be made by the local health department.

Decision Aid: Exclusion and Return for Laboratory Confirmed COVID-19 Cases and Persons with COVID-19-like Illness in Schools, Child Care Programs, and Youth Camps

For the purposes of this decision aid, COVID-19-like illness is defined as: New onset cough or shortness of breath **OR** At least **2** of the following: fever of 100.4° or higher, chills, shivering, muscle pain, sore throat, headache, loss of sense of taste or smell, and gastrointestinal symptoms (nausea, vomiting or diarrhea). **NOTE:** This definition was adapted from the clinical criteria in the [CDC case definition of a probable case of COVID-19](#).

Person (child, care provider, educator, other staff) with **ONE NEW** symptom not meeting the definition of COVID-19-like illness.

Exclude person and allow return when symptoms have improved and criteria in the [Communicable Diseases Summary](#) have been met as applicable. If person develops symptoms of COVID-19-like illness, follow processes below for person with COVID-19-like illness.

