



COVID Protocols Back to School - Fall 2021

COVID-19 Protocols

Close Contacts

The DESE and MA DPH define close contacts as individuals who have been within 6 feet of a COVID-19 positive individual while indoors, for at least 15 minutes during a 24-hour period. At risk exposure time begins 48 hours prior to symptom onset (or date of positive test if asymptomatic) and continues until the time the COVID-19 positive individual is isolated. School nurses in collaboration with the Bedford Health Department will follow contact tracing protocols to determine close contacts and families of close contacts will be notified by the school (see “Notification Protocols” below). In general, close contacts should follow testing and quarantine guidelines in the “Contact Tracing and Quarantining” section below, there are some exceptions:

- **Asymptomatic, fully vaccinated close contacts:** Asymptomatic, fully vaccinated close contacts are exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols
- **Classroom close contacts:** An individual who is exposed to someone who is COVID-19 positive in a classroom while both individuals were masked, provided both individuals were at least 3 feet apart, is exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols
- **Bus close contacts:** Masks are required on buses, therefore individuals who are masked on buses when windows are open are exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols
- **Close contacts who have had COVID-19 within the past 90-days:** An individual who has previously been diagnosed with COVID-19 who becomes a close contact with COVID-19 is exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols if the exposure occurred within 90-days of the onset of their own illness and the exposed individual is recovered and remains symptom free.

Notification Protocols

When a student is identified as a close contact, their parents/guardians will be notified and provided with further instructions in writing and/or through a phone call from their school nurse or the Bedford Health Department. Staff members who are identified as close contacts will hear directly from the school nurse, administrator, or the Bedford Health Department. All positive cases connected to our schools will be recorded on the town’s COVID-19 Dashboard at [Bedford COVID-19 Dashboard](#)

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Isolation, Quarantine and Testing Requirements

The DESE and DPH have developed updated testing and quarantine response protocols for individuals – students and staff – who test positive for COVID-19, close contacts who are not exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols, and symptomatic individuals. These protocols are in three categories:

- Protocol A: For individuals who test positive for COVID-19
- Protocol B: For asymptomatic close contacts
- Protocol C: Protocol for symptomatic individuals

Protocol A: Individuals who test positive for COVID-19

Self-isolation for positive cases is minimum of 10-days after symptom onset or after positive PCR or antigen test if asymptomatic.

- Individual may return to school after 10 days **and** once they have:
 - Been without fever for 24 hours (without taking fever reducing medication); and experienced improvement in other symptoms; and
 - Individuals who do not meet these criteria after 10 days may receive clearance from a public health contact tracer or school health professional before returning

Protocol B1 (Test and Stay): Asymptomatic close contacts

Exposed individuals must be tested for 7 consecutive days from the date of exposure.

Individual can remain in school and does not need to quarantine provided they:

- Are asymptomatic;
- Wear a mask at all times, other than when eating or drinking. When they cannot be masked, they should maintain 3 feet of distance from other individuals to the extent possible;
- Take a rapid antigen test on each school day and receive a negative result. When the 7 days from the date of exposure includes weekends, individuals should self-quarantine on weekends; and,

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- Conduct active monitoring of symptoms through day 14 and self-isolate at home if symptoms develop.

Protocol B2 (Traditional Protocol): Asymptomatic close contacts

Exposed individuals must quarantine for 7 consecutive days from the date of exposure

- Individual can return to school after 7 days (returning on day 8) provided that they:
 - Are asymptomatic;
 - Receive a COVID test (PCR or rapid antigen) on day 5 or later and receive a negative result; and,
 - Conduct active monitoring of symptoms through day 14 and self-isolate at home if symptoms develop.

Protocol B3 (Individual chooses not to be tested): Asymptomatic close contacts

Exposed individuals must quarantine for 10 consecutive days from the date of exposure

Individual can return to school after 10 days (returning on day 11) provided that they:

- Have not experienced symptoms up to this point; and,
- Conduct active monitoring of symptoms through day 14 and self-isolate at home if symptoms develop

Protocol C: Symptomatic individuals

The duration of this protocol is dependent on symptom resolution

Individual can return to school after they:

- Have received a negative PCR test result for COVID-19;
- Have improvement in symptoms; and,
- Have been without fever for at least 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medications.

NOTE: This protocol applies to both vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals

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FAQ's

1. If I test positive for COVID-19, when can I return to school?

- All individuals (regardless of vaccination status) who test positive for COVID-19 must isolate for a minimum of 10 days after symptom onset (or specimen collection date if asymptomatic).
- Return to school will be based on a minimum of 10 days of isolation time and your symptoms have improved.
- Repeat testing prior to return to school is not recommended. Please do not participate in pooled testing programs for at least 90 days after a positive test.

2. If a student or staff member is sick and experiencing symptoms, such as fever, cough, runny nose, what should they do?

- Before coming to school, both students and staff should be screened daily using the COVID-19 Daily Checklist. It is expected that each family will assess each of their children every day for symptoms by using the [COVID-19 Daily Screening Checklist](#) before their child comes to school.
- If the student has any symptoms of COVID-19, they should **stay home from school**. The family should notify their school nurse that the child will be absent and the reason for the absence. The school nurse will follow-up with the family regarding the child's symptoms, when the child was seen by a medical professional and any testing that was done. The child can return to school once cleared by the school nurse.

3. Can individuals identified as a close contact while at home (i.e., non-school based close contact) return to school and participate in the Test and Stay program?

Per DESE/DPH, the Test and Stay program is intended for school-based close contacts only. If your child is a close contact of someone who tested positive in your household, or in another out of school setting, then please contact your child's school nurse to review the quarantine timeline, and determine when they are able to return to school.

4. If there is a positive case of COVID-19 reported in my child's elementary school classroom, will the class be considered a close contact?

Yes. At this time if there is a positive case in the elementary classroom setting (Grades Pre-K through 5), the classroom members will be considered a close contact. Students who spend the entire day in a classroom where a positive case has been reported will be considered school close contacts and will be offered the option of Test and Stay to continue to attend school during the quarantine period.

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Need to reach your school nurse?

Please do not hesitate to contact your school nurse with any questions. Please be sure to reach out if your child is ill, has been identified as a close contact to someone with COVID-19, or has tested positive.

Nancy Thorsen	BHS	Nancy_Thorsen@bedfordps.org	781-275-1700 x4416
Tracy Fernald	JGMS	Tracy_Fernald@bedfordps.org	781-275-3165
Kathy Webster	Lane	Kathy_Webster@bedfordps.org	781-275-7623
Jennifer Capece	Davis	Jennifer_Capece@bedfordps.org	781-918-4906

For Information on DESE COVID Protocols in schools please refer to the following links:

[DESE Protocols for Responding to COVID-19 Scenarios](#)
[COVID-19 Protocols Flowcharts August 30, 2021](#)