

# Reopening K-12 Schools for In-Person, On-Site instruction Guidance for School Year 2020-2021

Updated as of January 30, 2021

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**PURPOSE:** To provide guidance on health and safety practices needed to safely resume in-person onsite instruction at K-12 schools. This guidance will be posted and updated as needed at: <https://www.mendocinocounty.org/community/novel-coronavirus/health-order>.

**BACKGROUND:** As K-12 schools in Mendocino County schools prepare to reopen this is an important time to carefully educate families and students who are newly reentering class and social activities. By working together we can ensure effective precautions to decrease transmission. Reopening slowly and with precautions will reduce the risk of COVID-19 for students, as well as their families and for adult staff, whose overall risk for adverse events from COVID-19 is likely greater than for most students. These recommendations are based upon updated CDPH Consolidated Schools Guidance ([https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/CDPH%20Document%20Library/COVID-19/Consolidated\\_Schools\\_Guidance.pdf](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/CDPH%20Document%20Library/COVID-19/Consolidated_Schools_Guidance.pdf)) and reflects best evidence available at this time and the current degree of COVID-19 transmission in Mendocino County. They are subject to change as new knowledge emerges and as local community transmission changes.

## KEY MESSAGES:

- **Preventing person-to-person respiratory transmission is critical:** Relatively small and stable groups, minimizing stable group mixing, face covering and physical distancing augmented, when needed, with barriers are central strategies in preventing the spread of COVID-19 in school settings.
- **Be aware that universal face coverings decrease but do not eliminate risk:** An infected person sneezing, coughing, singing or talking loudly spreads COVID-19 efficiently, particularly in enclosed spaces.
- **Exposure risk is a gradient, rather than an all-or-nothing condition.** Close contact exposure to a known case is within less than 6 feet, masked or unmasked, for 15 minutes *cumulatively* over 24 hours.
- **Frequent handwashing, regular cleaning and disinfection are important for infection control.**
- **Fresh air and effective ventilation lowers risk.** Maximize fresh (outdoor) air ventilation. Minimize or eliminate return or recirculated air. Being outside is lower risk than inside.

## AS YOU PREPARE FOR REOPENING:

- Designate a COVID-19 staff liaison to be the single point of contact at *each* school site for questions or concerns around practices, protocols, or potential exposure. This person will also serve as a liaison to MCPH when COVID-19 cases occur at your site.
- Establish health and safety protocols to prevent COVID-19 transmission, as recommended or required by the State and any MCPH Health Order.
- Create a health and safety plan outlining what the school will do to implement.
- Review State requirements, guidance and any relevant Health Officer Directive or Order.
- Share this plan with staff, families, students and other members of the school community.
- Train staff and students on health and safety practices.
- Plan for required regular surveillance testing of school staff.
- Establish protocols for staff and students with symptoms of COVID-19 and for communication with staff, students and families after COVID-19 exposure or a confirmed COVID-19 case in the school.
- Schools should continue to offer distance learning for students who request it. K-12 school sites should employ a phase-in model as a part of their reopening plan.
- As our understanding of COVID-19 grows, and local community transmission remains uncertain, please continue to anticipate that Mendocino County Public Health and the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) will develop additional guidance.

## STRATEGIES TO PREVENT SPREAD OF COVID-19 IN SCHOOLS:

### Face Coverings

*Face masks are source control; they help keep people from spreading respiratory droplets through the air to others.*

*Face shields which extend below the chin are protective of the wearer, especially when a cloth drape below the chin is added and tucked in at the shirt collar.*

- By Public Health Order, all adults and children age 2 and above must wear cloth face masks over both their nose and mouth at all times. This includes anyone dropping-off or picking-up children.
- Staff and students with a documented medical contraindication to a face covering may be allowed to wear a face shield with a cloth drape below the chin and tucked into the shirt.
- Speech and language therapists and staff working with younger or hard-of-hearing students may also use a face shield with a cloth drape if a face covering interferes with their ability to work with students.
- Students with documented medical or behavioral contraindications to face coverings should be seated 6 feet away from other students with care taken to not stigmatize the student.
- Schools must exclude from campus any adult or student if they are not medically exempt from wearing a face covering and refuse to wear one provided by the school.

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/guidance-for-face-coverings.aspx>

## **Ventilation and Outdoor Spaces**

*Increasing outdoor air circulation lowers the risk of infection by “diluting” any infectious respiratory virus with outdoor air. Please also refer to CDPH Consolidated Schools Guidance at p.23-24.*

- Recommend 50% of activities outside as possible, especially snacks/meals and activities that produce more respiratory droplets such as active exercise.
- Open windows to increase ventilation and promote flow of outdoor air through the indoor space whenever possible. Increase evacuation of air in rooms with exhaust fans and cross ventilation.
- Adjust mechanical ventilation systems to maximize fresh (outdoor) air ventilation. Minimize or eliminate return or recirculated air.
- Increased filter efficiency (such as HVAC at MERV 13 or above) may be desirable but is less important than maximizing outdoor air intake for COVID-19.

## **Screening & surveillance to keep COVID-19 out of schools**

- Restrict non-essential visitors.
- Public Health recommends that all persons entering the building or campus be pre-screened about recent symptoms and exposure to COVID-19. Anyone with symptoms or exposure to COVID-19 should not be allowed on campus.
- Ensure adequate space for 6’ distancing for those waiting at screening areas and provide appropriate personal protective equipment and physical barriers for those conducting pre-screening.
- Schools may require temperature checks, either on-site or done by parents at home. The cutoff for temperature screening is 100.4 °F  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/symptom-screening.html>
- Parents or caregivers should be strongly encouraged to monitor their children for signs of infectious illness every day and to keep students home when sick.

## **Maintain Stable Groups and Minimize Mixing of Groups to the extent possible**

*Without cohort controls one positive case could take down multiple classes and lead to School and District closures.*

- Maintain Stable Groups
- Stable Groups should be as small as possible.
- Do not change Stable Groups frequently.
- Minimize mixing between Stable Groups.
- Maintain more restrictive Stable Group controls with younger groups. With older students, emphasize more strict controls on social distancing and masking.
- Minimize adult in-person interaction, such as restricting lunchrooms, break rooms, and in-person consultations and meetings.

- School staff should document visits to classrooms by individuals not part of their Stable Group using a sign-in sheet/log on the classroom door. School staff should have a sign in/out sheet for each class with date and time and keep these on record to assist with contact tracing for a minimum of 14 days.
- Track Stable Groups and maintain records identifying individuals in each Stable Group daily. Include riders and transportation in tracking. Tracking can help minimize potential closures related to positive cases.
- School-wide closure is recommended (and may be required by the Health Officer) in event a school has multiple COVID-19 cases in multiple stable groups or classrooms, such as: (1) Within a 14 day period, an outbreak has occurred in 25% or more stable groups in the school; (2) Within a 14 day period, at least three outbreaks have occurred in the school and more than 5% of the school population is infected; and (3) When warranted for other reasons, including results from public health investigation or other local epidemiological data. . Districtwide closure is recommended (and may be required by the Health Officer) if 25% or more of schools within a district have closed due to COVID-19 within 14 days.

### **Maintain Physical Distancing**

- Maintain a minimum of 6' feet distance between all individuals, especially between teachers and students, as practicable. As to classroom space, upon request by County Public Health, and/or State Safe Schools Team, the superintendent should be prepared to demonstrate a good-faith effort, including an effort to consider all outdoor/indoor spaced options and hybrid learning models. Under no circumstances should distance between student chairs be less than 4' feet.
- Consider partitions between desks when 6' feet distance cannot be maintained
- Arrange desks forward facing to minimize face-to-face contact.
- Students should occupy the same seat or workspace in each class.
- Implement procedures for turning in assignments to minimize contact.
- Have orderly entry and exit protocols in place, including pick up and drop off plans.
- Designate specific routes using as many exits and entrances as possible to minimize mingling of stable groups.
- Stagger schedules for arrival/dismissal, recess and lunch.
- Minimize movement of students through hallways and consider creating one-way hallways to minimize congestion. Place physical guides, such as tape and placards on floors, walls and sidewalks to mark one-way routes and encourage distancing in classrooms.
- Assign adjacent classrooms to teachers in the same stable group to minimize the distance students travel between classes.
- Limit occupancy of bathrooms, elevators, locker rooms, staff rooms and similar shared spaces to allow 6 feet of distancing. Adjacent bathroom stalls may be used. Post signs with occupancy limits.

### **Meals and Snacks require vigilance**

*Eating together is especially high risk for COVID-19 transmission because people must remove their masks to eat and drink. People often touch their mouths with their hands when eating. In addition, meals are usually a time for talking together, which further increases risk, especially if students must speak loudly to be heard.*

- Schedule mealtimes outside of school hours when possible.
- Eat meals outdoors when feasible.
- Stagger lunch and snack times to avoid stable group mixing.
- Use individually plated or bagged meals.
- Maintain physical distancing.
- Encourage and facilitate hand washing and hand hygiene before and after eating.

## **Hand Hygiene**

*Frequent handwashing and hand sanitizer use removes COVID-19 germs from people's hands before they can infect themselves by touching their eyes, nose or mouth.*

- Develop routines and schedules for staff and students in all grades to wash or sanitize their hands at staggered intervals, especially before and after eating, upon entering/re-entering a classroom, and before and after touching shared equipment such as computer keyboards.
- Every classroom/instructional space and common area (staff workrooms, eating areas) should have 60% ethyl-alcohol based hand sanitizer or a place to wash hands upon entering.
- Supervise Children under the age of 12 in the use of hand sanitizer. Ensure that faculty and staff are aware of the risk of ingestion and to call Poison Control at 1-800-222-1222 if there is reason to believe that a student has consumed hand sanitizer.

## **Transportation**

- Riders must wear facial coverings while waiting for and riding on busses
- Ensure at least 6' between driver and riders when seated.
- Bus drivers should wear face shields with cloth bib extending below the chin and tucked in to the shirt collar when riders enter or exit. Use physical barriers to protect driver as allowed.
- Maximize physical distance by limiting available seats and keeping students at least 3' apart.
- Seat students from the same family together. Seat by stable group as possible.
- Open windows for increased circulation as weather allows.

## **Cleaning and Disinfection**

*Many household disinfectants are effective against COVID-19. Refer to EPA's List N for EPA-approved disinfectants effective against COVID-19. <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-coronavirus-covid-19>*

- Create School & equipment/materials disinfection protocols.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces at least daily.

- For details, refer to CDC guidelines for cleaning schools and community facilities at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html> and the Consolidated Schools Guidance regarding “Cleaning and Disinfection”

### **If a child is sick at school**

- School Site COVID-19 Liaison will be provided training to recognize suspected signs and symptoms of COVID-19 in Children and Youth under 18 years old and respond appropriately per school plan.
- Symptoms of COVID-19 may appear 2-14 days after exposure and may include: Fever (100.4°F/38°C or higher) or Chills, Cough, Sore throat, Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, Headache, Loss of taste or smell, Nausea or vomiting, Diarrhea. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/symptom-screening.html#symptoms>
- Each site must have a secured isolation area and plan for safely isolating those who are ill while at school. Plans should provide for adequate precautions including personal protective equipment, barriers and training for those who will be supervising ill children awaiting pickup.
- Parents and guardians should provide the school with contact information for a designated person ready to pick up their child each day if needed. Parents and guardians should provide the school with contact information for the child’s primary care provider and should be proactively supported to find primary care provider if they do not have one.
- Students presenting with symptoms should be sent home with instruction to contact their primary care provider immediately for evaluation and possible testing.
- Students waiting to be picked up will remain in the designated isolation area and maintain their face covering as practicable.
- Any workspace and isolation areas occupied by students who have been sent home will be disinfected. Arrange for cleaning and disinfection of the classroom and primary spaces where case spent significant time (see Cleaning and Disinfection above for recommendations). **This does not need to be done until students and staff in the area have left for the day.**

### **Testing for COVID-19**

- Please refer to CDPH Testing Considerations for LEAs and School Communities: [https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/CDPH%20Document%20Library/COVID-19/K12\\_School\\_Testing\\_Considerations\\_Information.pdf](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/CDPH%20Document%20Library/COVID-19/K12_School_Testing_Considerations_Information.pdf)
- Any school currently open or opened after the date of this Guidance is subject to the minimum testing requirement standards established by Cal/OSHA. These standards include response testing for exposed cases and outbreak testing for everyone weekly until no longer considered an outbreak. Please refer to Cal/OSHA guidance for complete details <https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/coronavirus/COVID19FAQs.html#testing>

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**TESTING CADENCE CHART**

	RED CR<1.0 TP<2%	ORANGE CR 1-3.9 TP 2-4.9%	RED CR 4-7 TP 5-8%	PURPLE CR >7=13.9 TP >7%	CR>14*
STAFF Small Districts (less than 1000 enrolled students)	Symptomatic and response testing	Symptomatic and response testing	Symptomatic and response testing	Symptomatic and response testing	Symptomatic and response testing + asymptomatic testing each week (1PCR or twice weekly antigen test – BinaxNOW)
STAFF Large Districts	Symptomatic and response testing	Symptomatic and response testing	Symptomatic and response testing	Symptomatic and response testing + asymptomatic testing every 2 weeks (1PCR or twice weekly antigen test – BinaxNOW)	Symptomatic and response testing + asymptomatic testing each week (1PCR or twice weekly antigen test – BinaxNOW)
STUDENTS Small Districts	Symptomatic and response testing	Symptomatic and response testing	Symptomatic and response testing	Symptomatic and response testing	Symptomatic and response testing
STUDENTS Large Districts	Symptomatic and response testing	Symptomatic and response testing	Symptomatic and response testing	Symptomatic and response testing	Symptomatic and response testing

**Public Health Orders for Isolation, Quarantine and Returning to School/Work**

- Sick children or staff staying home or sent home with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 **must be advised** contact their primary care provider for evaluation possible testing.
  - If test results are negative, or by written release by Provider, the sick individual may return to school after 24 hours without fever and without the use of fever reducing medication and if other symptoms are improving.
  - If test results are positive, The COVID-19 Liaison for the school must confer verbally with County Public Health immediately (on the day it learns of a confirmed COVID-19 case), by contacting (707) 272-8035 and by e-mail to [DOC-SCHOOLS@mendocinocounty.org](mailto:DOC-SCHOOLS@mendocinocounty.org). The site COVID-19 Liaison will coordinate with Public Health and Public Health Schools Liaison ([DOC-SCHOOLS@mendocinocounty.org](mailto:DOC-SCHOOLS@mendocinocounty.org)) to conduct contact tracing.
- The school must implement communication plans for exposure at school and potential school closures, including outreach to students, parents, teachers, staff, labor, and the community.

- A COVID-19 positive individual (case) will be provided Public Health Isolation Orders to stay home for at least 10 days after the date of test (date of sample collection) with at least 1 day (24 hours) without fever and without the use of fever-reducing medications and if other symptoms are improving.
- Close contacts of the positive case (exposed to a known case within less than 6 feet for 15 minutes cumulatively over 24 hours) including the school stable group and any school age siblings and household members will be provided Public Health Quarantine Orders to stay home for 10 days from their last close contact with the person with COVID-19 (including 48 hours before diagnosis or positive symptoms.) After stopping quarantine, people must strictly adhere to all COVID-19 prevention measures, including consistent use of face coverings and maintaining at least 6 feet distance from others through Day 14. Additionally, people should watch for symptoms until 14 days after exposure (and self-isolate and contact public health or healthcare provider if any symptoms develop). Close contacts are recommended to contact their primary care provider and to consider testing on day 11 from last close contact. *A negative test does not shorten the 10 day Quarantine.*
  - Isolation and Quarantine Orders in English and Spanish (with instructions) are found here:  
<https://www.mendocinocounty.org/community/novelcoronavirus/health-order>
  - Schools may wish to create a family-friendly cover letter when providing the Isolation and Quarantine orders.
- If a symptomatic student or staff refuses or is otherwise unable to test, that individual will be presumed positive and will receive isolation orders to stay home for at least 10 days from symptom onset and with at least 1 day (24 hours) fever free without the use of medications and with other symptoms improving. Close contacts of individuals presumed positive will be considered under Quarantine Orders.  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/disposition-in-home-patients.html>  
<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/Guidance-on-Returning-to-Work-or-School-Following-COVID-19-Diagnosis.aspx>
- The school must investigate if any work-related factors contributed to the risk of infection and update protocols as needed to prevent further cases. (See CDPH Guidelines, Responding to COVID-19 in the Workplace:  
<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID19/Workplace-Outbreak-Employer-Guidance.aspx>

**When someone has suspected or confirmed COVID-19: Quick Guide for Schools  
Steps to take for COVID-19 symptoms, close contact or confirmed COVID-19**

Scenario	Action	Communication
Child or staff has symptoms of COVID-19	Send home. Instruct to contact Primary Care Provider who may order test. <b>Stable Group remains OPEN.</b>	
Child or staff had close contact with someone with confirmed COVID-19	Send home with instructions to quarantine for 10 days after the last exposure. Recommend testing (but will not shorten 10 day quarantine) <b>Stable Group remains OPEN.</b>	Consider notifying staff and families or children in the <b>Stable Group</b> . “General Exposure Advisory” template letter.
Child or staff has confirmed COVID-19 infection (case)	Notify Mendocino County Public Health (707) 272-8035. Keep positive case home with instructions to isolate at home for at least 10 days after first symptoms occurred. Identify close contacts (*), likely including the entire <b>Stable Group</b> of the person with COVID-19. Instruct close contacts to Quarantine at home for 10 days after the last date of close contact (including 48 hours before symptoms developed). Must strictly adhere to all COVID-19 prevention measures: face coverings and maintaining at least 6’ distance from others through Day 14. Watch for symptoms until 14 days after exposure (self-isolate and contact PH or healthcare provider if any symptoms develop) Recommend testing, on day 11 (but will not shorten 10 day quarantine). Clean and disinfect spaces where the person with COVID-19 spent significant time. <b>Stable Group CLOSED for 10 days after last exposure. Non-exposed groups remain open.</b>	Provide Positive Case with Public Health Isolation Order.  Provide Close Contacts with Public Health Quarantine Order.  For staff and families of children who are close contacts consider a “Close Contact Advisory” see template letter.  For all other staff and families consider notification about the COVID-19 case, see “General Exposure Advisory” template  (* ) A close contact is a person who is less than 6 feet from the infected person for 15 minutes or more cumulatively over 24 hours (including 48 hours prior to symptom onset or test date of index case.)

## Criteria for return to school, childcare, or other programs after COVID-19 symptoms, close contact, or confirmed COVID-19

Scenario	Return when all of the following are true:
Child or Staff has a negative test after symptoms of COVID-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No fever for 24 hours, without using fever-reducing medicines such as acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil) or naproxen (Aleve).</li> <li>• Symptoms are improving.</li> <li>• Must show documentation of the negative test or a primary care provider's note.</li> </ul>
Child or Staff had symptoms of COVID-19 and had a positive test/ confirmed COVID-19 OR was not tested OR was tested and is still waiting for result	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• After 10 days since symptoms began.</li> <li>• Symptoms are improving.</li> <li>• No fever for 24 hours, without using fever-reducing medicines such as acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil) or naproxen (Aleve).</li> <li>• A primary care provider's note is not needed.</li> </ul>
Child or Staff had close contact with someone with confirmed COVID-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10 days after the last close contact (*), even if the child has a negative test during this time, or is still waiting for test result.</li> <li>• No symptoms have developed since the last close contact.</li> </ul> <p><i>If the child or staff has ongoing close contact with the person with COVID-19 (for example, a parent or caregiver), they must quarantine for 10 days after the person with COVID-19 is no longer infectious. In most cases, this is a total of 20 days after the person with COVID-19 first developed symptoms, or if asymptomatic, had a positive test.</i></p>
Child or Staff had a positive test but never had symptoms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10 days after their positive test was collected (not 10 days after the result was received)</li> </ul>

(\*) A close contact is a person who is less than 6 feet from the infected person for 15 minutes or more cumulatively over 24 hours (including 48 hours prior to symptom onset or test date of index case.)

**CLOSE CONTACT ADVISORY SAMPLE LETTER to send to staff and families of children who are close contacts to positive COVID-19 case**

Date:

Dear parents, guardians and staff of classroom \_\_\_\_\_,

This letter is to advise you of our recommendations regarding you or your child's recent exposure to an individual diagnosed with COVID-19. We provided these recommendations verbally to you on date \_\_\_\_\_. You may be contacted by Mendocino County Public Health for contact tracing to keep you and the community safe.

Starting now, you (or your child) have been told to Quarantine and should stay home (away from school, work, and away from other people). This may last for up to 10 days. Stay home even if you or your child are not ill. If you must leave your house for a medical appointment or other essential task during this time, you must wear a mask at all times and stay at least 6 feet away from others.

If you or your child develops a fever, cough, or shortness of breath you should contact your healthcare provider or clinic. Continue to stay home from work and school, and away from other people.

If you or your child need to go to a hospital or clinic please call the hospital or clinic about your exposure to COVID-19 BEFORE you arrive in order to help prevent the spread of illness. Wear a mask to prevent the spread of illness.

We strongly recommend having you or your child tested for COVID-19 on Day 11 from last contact with the positive case. We can help arrange for this.

Please notify the school site immediately if your child tests positive. However, regardless of the test results, you (or your child) may not go to a different day care, school, camp, or program until 10 days have passed from the last time your child was at the site.

There is more information about COVID-19 on the Mendocino County Public Health website: <https://www.mendocinocounty.org/community/novel-coronavirus>

If you have questions regarding COVID-19 in our community you can contact Mendocino County Public Health COVID-19 Call Center M-F 8:30 am- 5:00 pm (707) 472-2759.

Sincerely, \_\_\_\_\_

**GENERAL EXPOSURE ADVISORY SAMPLE LETTER Send to all other staff and families about the COVID-19 case (who were not close contacts)**

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Dear [XXX School/Classroom] Parents/Guardians and Staff:

We want students and staff to stay safe. A student or staff member in your child's class [lives with/has been in close contact with] a person who has tested positive for COVID-19.

That student or staff member will need to stay home until they are safe to come back to school.

The Mendocino County Department of Public Health is working with us to keep the school stay safe.

Your child's classroom will stay open. You or your child can still come to school. We will update you if anything changes.

Please keep checking your child for symptoms and stay home if they are sick. Symptoms of Covid-19 may appear 2-14 days after exposure and may include: Fever (100.4°F/38°C or higher) or Chills, Cough, Sore throat, Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, Headache, Loss of taste or smell, Nausea or vomiting, Diarrhea. Please contact your healthcare provider for any other questions.

For more information about COVID-19 in our community see the Mendocino Public Health COVID-19 website: <https://www.mendocinocounty.org/community/novel-coronavirus>. The

Public Health call center is open M-F 8:30 am- 5:00 pm at (707) 472-2759.

Thank you for helping to keep our school and community safe.

Sincerely, \_\_\_\_\_