



K-12 Quarantine in Ohio

The Ohio Department of Health's goal is to keep K-12 students in school, in-person five days a week. To achieve this goal, schools must work with their local health departments to identify students who are direct contacts of a positive case. In-person learning is very important for the development of our children, and can be conducted safely even in the face of COVID-19, particularly when schools employ layered prevention strategies including vaccination of teachers, staff, and students who are eligible, masking, social distancing, good ventilation, and good hygiene practices. Adopting layered prevention measures in schools now will help ensure students can learn in-person as much as possible this year, and keep children participating in extracurricular activities. Quarantine and isolation remain key strategies for preventing the spread of infectious diseases.

Important note: Exposure risk assessments are necessary and should be conducted by local health departments in cooperation with local schools to appropriately identify who should and should not be quarantined. Local health departments have authority to implement the quarantine and isolation process in accordance with Ohio Revised Code 3707.08.

Personal mitigation strategies to lessen the likelihood of quarantine:

- Get vaccinated if you are eligible.
- Wear a mask while you are indoors.
- Keep at least 3 foot distance as much as possible. Six feet is best practice.

Definitions:

"Case": The student or school staff member who is medically diagnosed with COVID-19. If the person is at school, they should be sent home immediately and follow appropriate isolation procedures as directed by the local health department. This student or staff member should not come to school or participate in extracurricular activities.

"Direct contacts": Direct contacts for COVID-19 are those individuals who are identified as being directly exposed to COVID-19 by the positive case. Remember, COVID-19 is a respiratory virus and does not require physical contact to spread.

Quarantine is NOT required if the direct contact has no symptoms and any of the three criteria below are met.

- The direct contact is fully vaccinated.
OR
- The school requires masks, maintains physical distance of 3 feet or more, and has documented COVID-19 prevention plans in place.
OR
- In schools that do not have mask requirements, the direct contact was wearing a mask and maintained physical distance of 3 feet or more.

(Even if the direct contact does not have to quarantine, to help slow the spread of the virus, they should:

- Vaccinated individuals: Get tested 3-5 days after exposure. Wear a mask until that test comes back negative.
- Unvaccinated individuals: Get tested at least 5 days after exposure. Wear a mask until that test comes back negative.)

For those not meeting the above criteria, they must follow quarantine procedures.

How the process works:

1. Positive case is reported to the school and/or local health department.
2. The local health department works with the school to begin the contact tracing process.
3. School should assist local health department by providing lists of possible direct contacts.
4. The local health department works with the school to assess exposure risk and determines who qualifies as a direct contact through interviews with the case and school officials.
5. The local health department determines the level of exposure and decides if the direct contact needs to be quarantined. Points to consider in determining exposure level:
 - a. Interview with direct contact.
 - b. Check vaccination status.
 - c. Determine whether direct contact was wearing a mask.
 - d. Assess direct contact's level of exposure to determine if they spent more than 15 minutes and were less than 3 feet from the case.
6. The local health department works with the school to communicate quarantine determination to the direct contacts.
7. If voluntary compliance cannot be obtained, children or staff shall be excluded from in-person school and school activities, based on the quarantine order of the local health department, according to Ohio Revised Code 3707.16.
8. The local health department is responsible for monitoring students or staff during the quarantine period.
9. Quarantined individuals should not participate in in-person activities until they are released from quarantine by the local health department.