

Case Investigation and Contact Tracing in Schools (K-12) 2020-2021



To help slow the spread of COVID-19, the local health department and schools can work together to notify students, parents, staff members, and volunteers when an exposure to COVID-19 has occurred at school. For questions regarding this process, please contact the Epidemiology program at (915) 212-6521.

Tasks Prior to School Opening:

- Identify a POC for each school
- Provide contact information for each POC to the LHD
- Compile a list of high-risk* individuals within each school

Local Health Department (LHD) Conducts Disease Investigation

- LHD Issues Isolation Notices for the Individual Testing Positive
- Quarantine Notices May Also Be Issued to Other Members in the Same Household

School POC Notified About Positive Case and Other Related Household Contacts

Before the 2020-2021 School Year Begins:

- The school should designate a point of contact (POC) to work with the local health department (LHD) when a student or staff member tests positive for COVID-19
- A list with contact information for each POC should be provided to the LHD
- The school POC should identify high-risk* individuals and compile a list within each school

When an Individual Tests Positive for COVID-19:

- The LHD will contact the individual and conduct a disease investigation, which includes beginning the contact tracing process, to identify others who may have been exposed to COVID-19
- The individual testing positive will be instructed to isolate and be issued an isolation notice, and cannot return to school until meeting the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) criteria](#) to be released or meets local health department guidance
- Other members in the same household who had close contact with the individual (being within 6 feet for 15 minutes or more) will be issued quarantine notices and should quarantine for 14 days from their last exposure to the individual who tested positive. Quarantined individuals that are students, staff members, or volunteers should not return to school until they have completed their full quarantine period, even if receiving a negative test result during their quarantine period

School-designated Point of Contact (POC) Notified:

- If an individual with COVID-19 attended school within 48 hours of symptoms starting (if symptomatic) or of being tested (if asymptomatic), the health department will contact the POC to notify of individuals who have been isolated and others who have been quarantined in the same household

*See "High-Risk Individuals Defined" Handout

**See "COVID-19 Symptoms" Handout

LHD Monitors Isolated Individual and Notifies School POC When Individual Testing Positive Has Been Cleared to Return to School

School Ensures/Increases Preventative Measures to Slow the Spread of COVID-19 Following Individual School's Plan, as Outlined in USBOE Handbook

School POC Compiles List of High-Risk Contacts and Provides List to LHD

LHD Contacts High-Risk Individuals & Their Parent/Guardian(s) to Provide Education & Assist Families in Making Informed Decisions to Protect Their Student

Individual Testing Positive Monitored & Returns to School:

- The LHD will monitor the isolated individual and release from isolation once CDC criteria has been met (at least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared and at least 72 hours have passed since last fever without the use of fever-reducing medications, and symptoms have improved)
- The individual testing positive can safely return to school after being released from isolation from the LHD
- The health department will contact the POC when an individual has completed isolation

School Ensures and/or Increases Preventative Measures:

- The POC works with the school administration to ensure preventative measures are followed or increased, according to the individual school's plan, as outlined in the USBOE Handbook
- The health department will provide any additional recommendations to the POC to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in the school, if needed

School POC Helps Identify High-Risk Individuals:

- The health department will ask the POC to compile a list of high-risk* individuals who may have been around the person who tested positive for COVID-19 during a specific time period. This list could include students, staff members, and volunteers in the same classes as the individual, those involved in the same sports teams, clubs, extracurricular activities, etc.
- The health department will contact all high-risk individuals to provide further guidance and instruction
- High-risk individuals include:
 - [anyone with certain underlying medical conditions](#)
 - [children who are medically complex](#)
 - [older adults](#)

LHD Contacts High-Risk Individuals:

- The health department will contact all high-risk individuals potentially exposed, using the list provided by the POC
- High-risk individuals will be provided with education and instructions on ways to take extra precautions, including to quarantine if needed

*See "High-Risk Individuals Defined" Handout

**See "COVID-19 Symptoms" Handout

High-Risk Individuals
Self-Monitor for Symptoms
& Get Tested for COVID-19
if Needed

High-Risk Individuals:

- Should self-monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 and get tested if they are or become symptomatic
- May need accommodations for learning to ensure health and safety is maintained
- The health department will continue to work with high-risk individuals if they later test positive

School POC Compiles List of
Others Potentially Exposed
At School

School POC Identifies Others Potentially Exposed:

- The health department will ask the POC to compile a list of others who were not identified as high-risk, but may have been exposed at the school

School POC Sends
Informational Letter and
Education Packet to All
Individuals Identified As
Being Potentially Exposed,
Including Information on
Self-Monitoring & When to
Get Tested for COVID-19

School POC Notifies Others Through Letter and Packet:

- After identifying others who were potentially exposed to COVID-19, but were not high-risk, the POC should fill out and send the template letter and education packet, provided from the health department
- All individuals receiving the letter and educational packet should self-monitor, or pay attention to how they are feeling, for 14 days after the last day of contact with confirmed case and are recommended to get tested for COVID-19 if they start to develop any symptoms**

Individuals
Self-Monitor for Symptoms
& Get Tested for COVID-19
if Needed

Individuals Not Considered to be High-Risk:

- Should self-monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 and get tested if they are or become symptomatic

LHD Conducts Additional
Investigation(s) if Needed

LHD Conducts Additional Investigations as Needed:

- The health department will conduct additional investigations with anyone else who tests positive for COVID-19 and repeat the same processes

*See "High-Risk Individuals Defined" Handout

**See "COVID-19 Symptoms" Handout