



## Department of Public Health

Monroe County, New York

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### MONROE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

## COVID-19 FAQs

### Monroe County K-12 Schools

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*This communication is intended to serve as an informational tool only to support families, schools and health care providers during the reopening of local schools in accordance with New York State guidelines. Interested parties should review the New York State guidance closely and consult their own counsel for legal advice.*

**Q1: When and how should schools and health care providers report a positive COVID-19 case to the MCDPH?**

**A:** Schools and health care providers must immediately notify the MCDPH when they become aware of a student, faculty member, staff or visitor who tests positive for COVID-19. Call the Monroe County COVID-19 Hotline at (585) 753-5555 and leave both a daytime and evening phone number. This line is available 24/7 and a MCDPH staff member will return your call.

**Q2: What happens after a school or health care provider reports a positive COVID-19 case to the Monroe County COVID-19 Hotline?**

**A:** The school will develop and implement an immediate action plan with support from the MCDPH. This could include closing a classroom, school building or district for 24 hours. The school will communicate its plan to its families, faculty and staff. MCDPH will begin contact tracing.

**Q3: How will families know if there is a positive COVID-19 case in their school district?**

**A:** The school district will alert families, faculty and staff and the MCDPH will issue a media advisory to the general public. Individuals who were exposed to a lab-confirmed COVID-19 positive case will receive a phone call from the MCDPH Contact Tracing Team and will receive further instructions at that time.

**Q4: What happens if a student or teacher in my child's classroom tests positive for COVID-19?**

**A:** With support from MCDPH, your school will provide instructions. MCDPH will likely recommend your school close the classroom for at least 24 hours. Being in the same classroom does not necessarily mean your student was exposed to COVID-19, so you might not get a call from our Contact Tracing Team. If you are worried, you should discuss your concerns with your

primary care physician. If you do not have a PCP, contact the COVID-19 Hotline at (585) 753-5555.

**Q5: What is the most important thing for families to remember?**

**A:** Check on your child's health every morning. Take a temperature reading and look for symptoms of illness *before* your child leaves for school. Do not send a child who has a fever or who is feeling ill to school. Period. Consult with your health care provider regarding any signs of illness.

**Q6: What kind of face covering is appropriate for students, faculty and staff?**

**A:** Cloth face coverings that cover both the nose and mouth are required. At this time, the MCDPH is recommending cloth masks for most situations. MCDPH is not recommending neck gaitors, bandanas, or scarves. Face shields worn without other appropriate face coverings are not an acceptable alternative. Some staff members will need additional personal protective equipment (PPE) at times. Please consult with your school's medical director or nurse.

**Q7: Can my child be exempted from having to wear a mask?**

**A:** MCDPH recommends all students wear a mask to protect other students, faculty and staff. Exemptions can be granted by primary care physicians, but only for rare, pre-existing conditions. If your child is having difficulty wearing a mask, consult with your primary care physician regarding techniques that will help your child adapt to a mask.

**Q8: What if another student is exempted from wearing a mask in school?**

**A:** The student must remain at least six feet from others at all times.

**Q9: What happens if a child shows potential symptoms of COVID-19 while at school?**

**A:** The student should immediately be separated from other students. The student's family will need to arrange pickup of the student and will be directed to consult with their health care provider.

**Q10: If a student tests positive for COVID-19, can the individual's siblings still come to school?**

**A:** No, siblings who reside in the same household will be placed in mandatory quarantine by the MCDPH Contract Tracing Team. They will be unable to return to school until MCDPH releases them from quarantine. This will be at least 14 days after the positive COVID-19 case is released from isolation OR the last contact with the isolated person.

**Q11: What happens if a family member of a student, faculty or staff member tests positive for COVID-19?**

**A:** The family member will be isolated and the student, faculty or staff member will be placed in mandatory quarantine by the MCDPH (or other local health department if they live in a nearby county) and will not be able to attend school until the health department releases them from quarantine.

**Q12: How will I know what to do if my student is placed in isolation or quarantine?**

**A:** The MCDPH Contact Tracing Team will walk you through the process and provide support throughout the isolation or quarantine process. If you have questions, you can call the Monroe County COVID-19 Hotline at any time: (585)753-5555 or email [COVID19@monroecounty.gov](mailto:COVID19@monroecounty.gov).

**Q13: How will I know what to do if my student is required to take a COVID-19 test?**

**A:** Work with your health care provider to schedule a test, either in the provider's office, an urgent care center or other location. For more information about testing and local test locations, go to <https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/find-test-site-near-you>.

**Q14: What if we don't have a health care provider, health insurance, or transportation or face other barriers that make it hard for me or my student to get a COVID-19 test? Where can I get help?**

**A:** Any Monroe County residents with or without insurance can get a free test at Monroe Community College. Follow the link in Q13 above for information. For other questions or concerns about getting a test, call the Monroe County COVID-19 Hotline at (585) 753-5555 or email [COVID19@monroecounty.gov](mailto:COVID19@monroecounty.gov).

**Q15: I don't want everyone to know if my child or I test positive for COVID-19. How can I protect my privacy?**

**A:** The MCDPH/School District will not publicly disclose the names of students, staff, faculty or visitors who test positive for COVID-19. If a student tests positive, the school building will be identified. If a staff or faculty member tests positive, the school district will be identified.

**Q16: Is there a threshold of infections or absentee rates that would indicate a school should close?**

**A:** While MCDPH can make a recommendation, it will be up to individual school districts to determine when a classroom, building or district should be closed. The factors under consideration are listed in the individual district plans that school districts have submitted to New York State.

New York State will close all schools in the Finger Lakes Region if the regional infection rate rise above 9%. To track the regional infection rate, go to <https://forward.ny.gov/early-warning-monitoring-dashboard>.

**Q17: Are there warning signs that I can track in my own school district?**

**A:** At present, MCDPH does not compile district-level infection rates. To track trends in Monroe County, go to [www.monroecounty.gov/health-COVID-19](http://www.monroecounty.gov/health-COVID-19) and click on the link to the COVID-19 Dashboard. MCDPH is closely monitoring numerous local datasets for signs of increasing community spread and will notify the public if that occurs.

**Q18: I work at a school. How often should I get tested for COVID-19?**

**A:** While anyone in New York State can get tested for COVID-19, there is no recommended schedule for faculty or staff to receive routine testing. If you have been exposed to a lab-confirmed COVID-19 positive case, the MCDPH contact tracing team will call you and provide guidance related to testing. If you are having symptoms or want to set up a regular testing regime for yourself, please consult with your primary care physician.

**Q19: What are some frequently used terms that I should know?**

**A:** Here are definitions to terms frequently used when discussing COVID-19:

- **Potential Exposure:** Being in the same household or having come into close contact with an individual who is confirmed or suspected to have a COVID-19 infection.
- **Close Contact:** Someone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes, during the period starting 48 hours before symptoms appeared until the time the infected person is isolated, and one or both of these individuals were not wearing a mask.
- **Proximate Contact:** Being in the same enclosed environment such as a classroom, office or gathering, but greater than 6 feet from a person displaying symptoms of COVID-19 or someone who has tested positive for COVID-19.
- **Contact Tracing:** The identification and follow-up of individuals who may have come into contact with a person infected with COVID-19.
- **Case:** An individual with a lab-confirmed COVID-19 diagnosis. Cases are always issued an Isolation Order by MCDPH unless the individual has had a prior lab-confirmed case within the past 12 weeks and has completed the initial isolation.
- **Isolation:** The process of separating an individual who has a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19 from others for 10 days or more following the onset of symptoms. MCDPH must issue a release from isolation before it can end.
- **Mandatory Quarantine:** The process of separating an individual who has been in close contact with someone who is positive from others. That way, if the individual develops COVID-19, the individual cannot spread it to others. As long as no symptoms develop, the quarantine period lasts for at least 14 days since the last contact between the two individuals. If symptoms develop during quarantine, MCDPH will provide additional instructions. MCDPH must issue a release from mandatory quarantine before it can end.

- **Positive Screen:** Screening for COVID-19 includes a series of questions to determine a person's risk for COVID-19. A positive screen means the individual is at risk for having a COVID-19 infection.
- **Antibodies:** Antibodies are proteins that can help protect an individual who had COVID-19 from getting it again. It is not yet known what level of antibodies results in immunity, or for precisely how long.
- **Rapid Antigen Test:** This type of test for COVID-19 infection provides results in under one hour. (These tests have a higher false negative rate than a PCR test, but are appropriate in some situations. Please consult with your primary care physician.)
- **PCR Test:** This type of test detects whether an individual currently has COVID-19. Current evidence indicates a person may continue to test positive for several months after having COVID-19, though the individual is no longer ill or contagious.

