



Dear School Nurses and Health Representatives:

First and foremost, we hope that you and your loved ones are well and healthy. We also want to thank you for everything you are doing to keep the staff and students in your schools safe during this pandemic. To address the threats of COVID-19 transmission during in-person child education, we are providing additional resources and guidance below for how to respond if a person (or cluster of people) at the school are either confirmed or believed to be probable cases of COVID-19. If you have any questions or would like further guidance, please let us know and we can provide support.

**School Reporting to DSHS 6/5S:**

*Reporting to 6/5S is separate from weekly DSHS Vulnerable Populations and Facilities Task Force (VPFTF) reporting.*

- Students or staff with COVID-19 should be reported to DSHS by fax (713-767-3049) or SECURE email ([SchoolsCOVID@dshs.texas.gov](mailto:SchoolsCOVID@dshs.texas.gov)).
  - If reporting by email, please send the email with encryption, or request us to send you an encrypted email you can reply to.
- Please use **School Report Form** (attached) to report.
  - Necessary information: case name, date of birth, home address, home phone, type of test (Antigen, PCR, Antibody), and where tested. **School Report Form** contains these fields.

**Recommended Assessment and 'Contact Tracing' for Infection Prevention:**

*DSHS 6/5S recommends the school perform limited ISD contact tracing internally, and we offer support or assistance as requested*

- Available guidance for public health personnel engaged in contract tracing can be modified for school needs:
  - [Contact Tracing](#)
  - [Resources](#)
- School employees should be provided [appropriate information and training regarding confidential guidelines and legal regulations](#). All personnel with access to case investigation and contact tracing information need to sign a confidentiality statement.
- The number of personnel with access to personally identifiable information (PII) should be minimized, preferably to only the school nurse and/or administration.
- The school nurse or health representative should contact the case and determine close contacts from the ISD with exposure to that case during the following time frame:
  - From two days prior to symptom onset (symptomatic) or positive test date (asymptomatic), until 10 days after symptom onset or positive test date (or until isolated).
- All close contacts within the ISD should be notified by the school and should quarantine for [14 days after last exposure](#). **Quarantined individuals should not return to school earlier than 14 days, even with a negative test.**

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### **Reporting an Outbreak of COVID-19 Cases:**

- If three (3) or more individuals positive for COVID-19 are epidemiologically linked (i.e. in the same class, same sports team, same extracurricular activity, etc), or if multiple cohorts or classrooms of students are involved:
- Please report the **outbreak of COVID-19** to DSHS by fax (713-767-3049) or SECURE email ([SchoolsCOVID@dshs.texas.gov](mailto:SchoolsCOVID@dshs.texas.gov)).
- Use the **School Report Form** to report individual case details
- Use the *THT Outbreak line list templates* (attached) to compile outbreak-related cases and close contacts information from the ISD
  - Use "Case Template" for multiple COVID-19 case reporting
  - Use "Exposed Contact Template" to report close contacts
    - The first 4 columns of Contact Template (First/ Last Name, DOB, Zip Code) refer to the COVID-19 Case.

### **More Information on**

### **Case Interview and Contact Tracing (ISD Infection Control):**

- I. Case Interview: Collect the following minimum information
  - a. Case's personal information (name, address, DOB, phone number)
  - b. Symptoms
  - c. Date of symptom onset or date of test
  - d. Type of test
  - e. Please submit **School Report Form** with this information
  - f. Identify the places the infected person had interacted with their contacts (classroom, sports team, club, after-school activity, etc.) and description of interaction (close or distanced)
  - g. Identify close ISD contacts
  - h. Obtain contact information for close ISD contacts
  - i. Please submit the **Exposed Contact Template** with this information
  
- II. Definitions of Close Contact:
  - a. **CDC** - Close contact is defined as being within 6 feet for a total time of 15 minutes or more within a 24-hour period.
  - b. **TEA**- In general, close contact is defined as:
    1. being directly exposed to infectious secretions (e.g., being coughed on); or
    2. being within 6 feet for a largely uninterrupted or sustained extended contact period throughout the course of a day of approximately 15 minutes; however, additional factors like case/contact masking (i.e., both the infectious individual and the potential close contact have been consistently and properly masked), ventilation, presence of dividers, and case symptomology may affect this determination.
    3. Either (1.) or (2.) defines close contact if it occurred during the infectious period of the case, defined as two days prior to symptom onset to 10 days after symptom onset. In the case of asymptomatic individuals who are test-confirmed with COVID-19, the infectious period is defined as two days prior to the confirming test and continuing for 10 days following the confirming test

III. Notify Close Contacts of possible exposure

**When notifying close contacts, be sure to maintain patient confidentiality.**

To protect patient privacy, close contacts should only be informed that they may have been exposed to a patient with the infection.

- a. Recommend 14-day quarantine from the last date of exposure to the infected person
- b. Encourage symptom monitoring
- c. Refer to medical care as necessary

Further information may be found at:

TEA Public Health Guidance

<https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/covid/SY-20-21-Public-Health-Guidance.pdf>

CDC Strategies for Protecting K-12 School Staff

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-staff.html#:~:text=When%20providing%20care%20for%20anyone,a%20surgical%20facemask%20if%20a>

CDC Guidance for Case Investigation and Contact Tracing in K-12 Schools

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/contact-tracing.html>

CDC Considerations for Operating Schools during COVID-19

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/schools.html>

CDC Guidance for K-12 School Administrators on the Use of Masks

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/cloth-face-cover.html>

CDC Indicators for Dynamic School Decision-Making

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/indicators.html>

Thank you and stay healthy,

**Region 6/5 South**

**TX Dept. of State Health Services**

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