

Summary of Changes to Isolation and Quarantine Guidelines

On Wednesday, December 29th, 2021 The Massachusetts Department of Public Health voted to adopt revised guidelines for Covid 19 isolation and quarantine based on new recommendations from the CDC. On December 30, 2021 the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education released updated protocols for Massachusetts Public Schools based on these revised guidelines. This document serves to highlight and explain the key changes to Covid protocols. Please note that districts are mandated to adhere to the guidelines published by DPH and DESE and do not have the authority to alter or reduce isolation and quarantine requirements.

How long do students who test positive for Covid 19 need to isolate?

On December 29, 2021 the Massachusetts Department of Public Health voted to accept the revised isolation and quarantine guidance issued by the CDC. Individuals who test positive after this date are required to self-isolate for a minimum of five days after symptom onset or for asymptomatic individuals, for five days after the date of the positive PCR or antigen test. Students are able to return to school on day 6 **IF** they have been fever free for 24 hours without taking fever-reducing medications **AND** they have experienced an improvement in symptoms.

What if my child tested positive prior to December 29, 2021?

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health adopted the revised CDC guidelines for isolation and quarantine on December 29, 2021. These revised guidelines apply to positive cases identified after the adoption of the new standards and are not retroactive. If a child tested positive for Covid 19 prior to December 29, 2021, they are required to isolate for the full ten-day period. Please note that the district is mandated to adhere to the guidelines issued by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and does not have the authority to override these requirements.

What happens if my child is a close contact of a Covid 19 positive individual at school?

Students who are identified as a close contact of a Covid 19 positive individual at school are still able to participate in the district test and stay program. Close contacts may remain in school **IF** they are asymptomatic and they take a rapid antigen test on each school day and receive a negative test result. Students must now test for a period of 5 days from the date of exposure instead of 7. If the five day period includes a weekend, students should quarantine over the weekend and test upon return to school on Monday.

What are the requirements for masking for students who have tested positive for Covid 19 after day 5?

Students who have tested positive for Covid 19 and who are eligible to return to school on day 6 **MUST** continue to wear masks at all times when in school for an additional five days. This includes masking while outdoors at recess and at all times when in the school building. Students may briefly remove masks in order to eat their lunch, but should put their masks back

on as soon as they have finished eating. All students in Norfolk maintain social distance when eating in lunchrooms.

What are the masking requirements for students who are close contacts of a Covid 19 positive individual and who are participating in the test and stay program?

Students who are close contacts of Covid positive individuals at school and are participating in the district test and stay program, **MUST** also wear masks at all times when in school for five additional days after daily testing has concluded. This includes masking when outdoors at recess and at all times in the school building. Students may briefly remove masks to eat lunch.

How long is the quarantine period for students who are close contacts of a Covid 19 positive individual outside of school or for students who choose not to participate in the test and stay program?

Students who are close contacts of Covid 19 positive individuals outside of school (or who chose not to participate in the district test and stay program) must quarantine for a minimum of five days from the date of exposure. Students may return to school on day 6 **IF** they are asymptomatic. These students should continue to actively monitor for symptoms for an additional five days and will be required to follow the same strict masking protocols as other close contacts for an additional five days after the period of quarantine.

What are the requirements for students who demonstrate symptoms of Covid 19, but have not been identified as Covid positive?

Students who demonstrate symptoms of Covid 19 must stay home from school.

Parents/guardians are strongly encouraged to reach out to their healthcare provider for further direction. Students who have not been diagnosed with Covid 19 **and** who are not close contacts of a Covid positive individual, may return to school after they have received a negative PCR or antigen test result. Under the new DESE guidance, antigen tests do not need to be administered by a healthcare professional. Parents may opt to administer a rapid antigen test at home and must provide the district with evidence of a negative test result. A photograph of the negative antigen test is acceptable evidence and can be sent to your child's school nurse. Please remember that in all cases students must have been fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications and have experienced a significant improvement in symptoms before returning to school.

Will the mask mandate remain in effect for all other students and staff members?

At this time, the mask mandate remains in effect for all students and staff members at all times when in school buildings, with the exception of lunch and snack. Masks are not required when students are outside at recess unless they fall under one of the categories described above.

What criteria makes students/staff members exempt from testing and quarantine requirements?

The following individuals are exempt from testing and quarantine protocols:

- Individuals who are fully vaccinated* and are asymptomatic
- Individuals who are exposed to a Covid 19 Positive individual in the classroom while both individuals were masked and maintained a minimum of 3 feet of distance
- Individuals who are exposed to Covid 19 on the bus when masked with windows open
- Individuals who have had Covid 19 within the past 90 days and who remain asymptomatic

*At this time fully vaccinated is defined as two weeks following the completion of the Pfizer or Moderna series or two-weeks following a single dose of the Johnson and Johnson Janssen vaccine