



MEMORANDUM

TO: Local school leadership

DATE: September 29, 2021

SUBJECT: Isolation and Quarantine Guidelines

The purpose of this memorandum is to relay the most recent information on control measures in schools, with a focus on isolation, quarantine, and exclusion.

We are incredibly appreciative of all the difficult work you have done over the last 18 months to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and to keep children and staff safe. Long standing and scientifically proven control measures are essential public health practices to prevent the spread of communicable diseases.

Isolation, Quarantine, and Exclusion for students and staff can be minimized by adopting the layered prevention strategies in the StrongSchoolsNC Toolkit. Numerous studies have shown that viral transmission in school settings can be very low, if layered prevention strategies are in place. **Isolation** is the control measure used to separate people who have a communicable disease from others who are not infected. **Quarantine** is a control measure used to separate someone who had been exposed to a communicable disease for a time period that prevents the spread of the disease. **Exclusion** is a control measure to ensure people who have been infected with or exposed to a communicable disease do not spread the disease to others (and are thus “excluded” from school).

The **isolation period** for people with COVID-19 is 10 days if, at the end of the 10-day period, the person has not had a fever for 24 hours and other symptoms (if experienced) are improving. Schools are required to exclude students, teachers, and staff that meet the criteria to isolate.

Quarantine and exclusion from in-person learning can be avoided for close contacts of a person with COVID-19 in the following circumstances:

- Staff, teachers, and students who are fully vaccinated and do not have symptoms do not need to quarantine or be excluded from school based on exposure.
- Students who were exposed by another student do not need to quarantine or be excluded from school if they do not have symptoms and face masks were being used appropriately by both the student with COVID-19 and the potentially exposed student at the time of the exposure. **This option does not apply for schools that do not have mandatory masking policies in place.**

- Staff, teachers, and students who have had a COVID-19 infection in the past 90 days and who do not have symptoms do not need to quarantine or be excluded from school based on exposure.

People who do not meet the above exceptions for quarantine and exclusion must quarantine and the school must exclude those individuals from school in accordance with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations and North Carolina law governing control measures.

Based on the September 20, 2021 guidelines from the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, the Martin Tyrrell Washington District Health Department is recommending local schools adopt the following measures for quarantine and exclusion:

Quarantine and Exclusion Options:

The CDC continues to recommend quarantine of 14 days after the last exposure, the entirety of the incubation period. However, the CDC has identified two shorter quarantine options:

- 10 days of quarantine if the person has no symptoms.
- 7 days of quarantine if the person has no symptoms, and the individual has received results of a negative antigen (rapid test) or PCR/molecular test that was conducted no earlier than day 5 of quarantine. Fingerstick antibody tests are not recommended for determining current infection and should not be considered when using this option.

If quarantine is discontinued before day 14 and an individual is permitted by the school to return under the shortened periods above, the individual should continue to monitor symptoms and strictly adhere to all non-pharmaceutical interventions (e.g., wear a mask, practice physical distancing) through 14 days after the date of last exposure. Students involved in medium and high-risk athletic activities outlined in the Interim Guidance for Youth Amateur Sports (August 6, 2021) should continue to refrain from practices and games for a period of 14 days.

Students, parents, teachers, and staff who wish to adhere to the full 14-day quarantine option should be able to do so without penalty.

Again, thank you for your continued commitment to keeping students, teachers, and staff safe during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sincerely,



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