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COVID-19 in K-12 Schools: Public Health Guidance for Administrators

The Miami County Health Department is releasing the following public health guidance for K-12 schools. The recommendations are based on currently available data and science, as well as other expert analysis from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE), Johnson County Department of Health and Environment (JCDHE) and Children’s Mercy Hospital. Miami County schools have been some of the first in the state to move forward in offering the opportunity for in-person learning to students and families. Miami County Health Department has worked closely with regional health departments and school administrators to quickly identify cases and close contacts within the schools, and to monitor the spread of COVID-19 through case and contact investigation. As of September 2nd, 2020, Miami County Health Department Guidance for Administrators has been issued to reflect the incentivized usage of masks within the school settings.

The guidance in this document may change as additional scientific evidence becomes available and the findings dictating practice expand.

Community transmission of COVID-19 is currently moderate-to-high in Miami County. There have been, and will continue to be, cases within the schools. The guidelines below are intended to prevent transmission of COVID-19 in the school setting, meaning that even if an individual is in the building during their infectious period, the infection does not spread to others in the same space.

COVID-19 is a respiratory illness, which is contracted through the droplets of an infected person. These droplets are produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, sings, speaks, etc. Mitigation techniques work. Masking, social distancing, hand washing, staying home when ill, and other source controls have been proven to be effective. If properly adopted by students and staff, the risk of COVID-19 transmission in schools can be reduced. Additional measures, such as assigned seating and cohorting, should be implemented by school personnel to ensure timely and accurate contact tracing is possible to further prevent transmission.

Definitions

COVID-like illness (CLI): The presence of one primary symptom or two or more secondary symptoms (see boxes below for symptom lists).

Contact tracing: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention defines contact tracing as, “an evidence-based way to slow the spread of infectious disease. It is the process of interviewing individuals who have been infected with a disease, identifying close contacts that they may have unknowingly exposed, and providing those contacts with the information needed to monitor their own health and prevent the continued spread of the illness.” See “Contact Tracing and Exclusion of Contacts” for legal justification of this public health activity.

Quarantine: Keeps someone who might have been exposed to the virus away from others. Individuals in quarantine should stay home. If an individual must be in public to seek medical assistance, practice masking and physical distancing as much as possible.

COVID-19 Quarantine: Quarantine for 14 days from last exposure to a person with confirmed or suspected COVID-19

Isolation: Isolation separates people who are infected with the virus away from people who are not infected. Individuals with confirmed or presumed COVID-19 should isolate within their household and use a separate bedroom/bathroom, if possible. Sleeping areas should not be shared. Individuals should not spend time in common household areas (living room, kitchen); if face-to-face interactions must take place, all household members should mask. Disinfect frequently touched surfaces in the household often.

COVID-19 Symptomatic Isolation:

Isolate for:

1. At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared AND
2. At least 24 hours fever-free without the use of fever-reducing medications AND
3. Significant improvement in initial symptoms.

COVID-19 Asymptomatic Isolation:

Isolate for 10 days from a positive test. Use the date specimen was collected, not the date of results.

Close Contact/Exposure: Close contact is defined as being within six feet for 10 cumulative minutes or more in a single day, without masks. People who are close contacts of a COVID-19 positive or presumed positive individual during that person’s infectious period are considered exposed and should quarantine.

Infectious period: An individual is considered infectious (capable of spreading the virus) 48 hours prior to their symptom onset until ten days after symptom onset and 24 hours after their

fever (if present) has resolved without the aid of medication and initial symptoms have improved. For an asymptomatic individual who tests positive for COVID-19, their infectious period is considered to be two days before until ten days after their specimen was collected.

Presumed Positive: Individuals with a known exposure to a COVID-19 positive individual who become symptomatic are presumed positive.

Symptomatic Individuals in a School Setting

Individuals can spread COVID-19 even before they develop symptoms, and individuals who are infectious (spreading the virus) may not have any symptoms. The symptoms of COVID-19 are wide ranging, from a loss of taste and smell to severe respiratory issues.

Staff

Staff who have at least one primary symptom OR two or more secondary symptoms are assumed to have COVID-19 and should be excluded from school and school-related activities and isolate at home. Fever is a primary symptom in adults.

Staff with symptoms should consult with a health care provider to be tested for COVID-19 and/or obtain an alternative diagnosis. Many primary care providers and urgent care clinics offer COVID-19 testing in Miami County.

Staff members who exhibit one primary symptom OR two or more secondary symptoms and are either not tested or test positive for COVID-19 should remain out of school and all school-related activities for 10 days after their symptoms began AND 24 hours after their fever (if present) has resolved without the aid of medication AND their initial symptoms have improved.

Staff who test negative for COVID-19 can return to work 24 hours after their symptoms improve. If a physician indicates the symptoms are due to a non-infectious diagnosis (e.g., allergies, asthma), they can return to work prior to symptom resolution. If an employee only has one secondary symptom, the individual should be excluded for 24 hours after their symptom improves.

Staff Primary Symptoms (at least one):

- Fever ≥ 100.4
- New onset cough
- Difficulty breathing
- Loss of taste/smell

Staff Secondary Symptoms (at least two):

- Extreme fatigue
- Chills
- Congestion/runny nose
- Nausea/vomiting/diarrhea
- Sore throat
- Headache
- Muscle or body aches

Students

Students with at least one primary symptom OR two or more secondary symptoms are assumed to have COVID-19 and should be excluded from school and school-related activities and isolate at home. Fever is considered a secondary symptom in children.

Children who exhibit one primary symptom OR two or more secondary symptoms and are not tested or test positive for COVID-19 should remain out of school and all school-related activities for 10 days after their symptoms began AND 24 hours after their fever (if present) has resolved without the aid of medication AND their initial symptoms have improved.

If the student is tested for COVID-19 and is negative, they can return to school 24 hours after their symptoms improve. If a physician indicates the symptoms are due to a non-infectious diagnosis (e.g., allergies, asthma), the child can be readmitted to school prior to their symptoms resolving. If a child has only one secondary symptom, the individual should be excluded for 24 hours after their symptom improves.

Students Primary Symptoms (at least one):

- New onset cough
- Difficulty breathing
- Loss of taste/smell

Student's Secondary Symptoms (at least two):

- Fever ≥ 100.4
- Extreme fatigue
- Chills
- Congestion/runny nose
- Nausea/vomiting/diarrhea
- Sore throat
- Headache
- Muscle or body aches

Guide for Testing, Return to School and Contact Tracing

Students and staff can return to school, work, and extracurricular activities under the following guidelines (adopted from Children’s Mercy Hospital guidance, update version 7/28/20:

<https://www.childrensmercy.org/siteassets/media/covid-19/guidance-for-school-re-opening-during-the-covid-19-pandemic.pdf>

Screening Results	Does the Individual Require a COVID-19 test?	When Can the Individual Return to School?	Contact Tracing Needed?
1 primary symptom OR ≥2 secondary symptoms AND No COVID-19 exposure	YES	Negative COVID-19 Test: 24 hours after fever resolution and symptom improvement OR If the provider believes that an alternate diagnosis is the cause of signs and symptoms, return precautions should be specific to diagnosis	NO
		NO Test: At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared AND at least 24 hours since resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications AND improvement in symptoms	NO
		Positive COVID-19 Test: At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared AND at least 24 hours since resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications AND improvement in symptoms	YES

Screening Results	Does the Individual Require a COVID-19 test?	When Can the Individual Return to School?	Contact Tracing Needed?*
1 primary symptom OR ≥2 secondary symptoms AND Exposure to a person with COVID-19 in the last 14 days*	YES	Negative COVID-19 Test: 14 days from last exposure to person with COVID-19	See Below*
		NO Test: At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared AND at least 24 hours since resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications AND improvement in symptoms	YES*
		Positive COVID-19 Test At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared AND at least 24 hours since resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications AND improvement in symptoms	YES*

*According to CSTE/CDC case definition, individuals with a known exposure and COVID-like illness are considered probable cases. Contact tracing and exclusions should be performed without a test or prior to test results coming back due to the high likelihood that an individual has COVID-19.

**Contact tracing should be relatively simple since individuals in this situation should already be in quarantine

Screening Results	Does the Individual Require a COVID-19 test?	When Can the Individual Return to School?	Contact Tracing Needed?
1 secondary symptom AND No COVID-19 exposure	NO	24 hours after fever resolution and symptom improvement OR If alternate diagnosis is made, return precautions should be specific to diagnosis	NO

Screening Results	Does the Individual Require a COVID-19 test?	When Can the Individual Return to School?	Contact Tracing Needed?
Exposure to a person with COVID-19	NO	14 days from last exposure to a person with COVID-19.	NO

Management of a COVID-19 Positive Individual

All individuals who test positive or who are presumed positive, must be excluded from school settings until they are no longer infectious.

It is likely that several days will pass between a person being sent home with symptoms and test results coming back. The 10-day isolation period is always based off the first day the individual became symptomatic, regardless of testing. The infectious period for asymptomatic individuals (not showing any symptoms) is 48 hours before the lab specimen was collected until 10 days after their lab test.

Contact Tracing and Exclusion of Contacts

According to guidance from KDHE, school administrators (including nurses and teachers) are considered mandated reporters of infectious diseases under K.S.A. 65-118. A mandated reporter is NOT considered a third-party under Kansas HB 2016 (passed in 2020) and is still required to provide information to county and state public health officials. A mandated reporter can share information on close contacts of a case WITHOUT consent from the contacts.

Miami County Health Department staff and school officials will partner on contact tracing activities to ensure that transmission chains in schools or at school-related activities are broken. School officials will only be responsible for contact tracing within the school, while Miami County Health Department will be responsible for identifying and quarantining contacts outside of the school setting. Quarantining close contacts of infected individuals is a tried and true public health mitigation technique.

Each school should designate an individual (large buildings should designate multiple individuals) to be the point person on contact tracing. Contact tracing should be completed the

same day a school is notified (by Miami County Health Department or the individual/family) of a confirmed positive COVID-19 case. Contact tracing should only be conducted on confirmed positive cases; exceptions may be made when an individual with an exposure to a positive case becomes symptomatic. In this case, the individual is presumed positive and contact tracing can be conducted before schools/Miami County Health Department receives confirmatory results.

High Risk Exposures

- Anything unmasked, especially when not distanced
- Eating breakfast/lunch/snack less than six feet apart, unless otherwise approved (by Miami County Health Department or KDHE) physical barriers are in place (i.e. Plexiglas)
- Physical exertion, in or outdoors, less than 6 feet for longer than 10 minutes
- High-risk sports, as defined by the National Federation of State High School Associations, include “sports that involve close, sustained contact between participants, lack of significant protective barriers, and high probability that respiratory particles will be transmitted between participants.”
- Playing woodwind and brass instruments without other precautions (mask, distance)
- Singing/shouting without other precautions

Low Risk Exposures

- Being in the same classroom with proper mask wearing
- On the same bus with mask wearing, ventilation, 3’ distance
- Playground, even if unmasked, (social distancing and cohorts should be maintained); this moves into a high-risk exposure if kids have sustained contact with physical exertion for more than 10 minutes

No Exposure

- Walking in the same hallway masked
- Attending class the period after a positive individual

Wearing a Mask Changes Exclusion Protocol

Mask wearing has been shown to be an effective way to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Individuals who are wearing masks and are in close contact (6 feet for 10 minutes or more) with an infectious individual are considered low risk for contracting COVID-19. Miami County Health Department does not recommend excluding students and staff who are close contacts of a COVID-19 positive individual, as long as masks were being worn correctly (covering nose and mouth). Individuals who were unmasked within 6 feet for 10 cumulative minutes or more in a single day or participated in a high-risk activity with the COVID-19 positive individual during their infectious period, or who were directly exposed to respiratory droplets/excretions for any amount of time, **must be excluded** for 14 days from their last interaction with the individual.

If an individual is tested during their 14-day quarantine period and is negative for COVID-19, they still need to complete the 14-day quarantine before returning to school, as symptoms can take up to 14 days to develop.

Exclusion of a Group

The risk of COVID-19 transmission is low if public health mitigation techniques such as proper masking, physical distancing and hand hygiene are being followed. If transmission is occurring within a group setting (such as a classroom, sports team, bus route, etc.), it is an indication that public health measures have not been followed. **If there are two or more positives in a group*** contact Miami County Health Department to determine if there is evidence of COVID-19 transmission. If transmission is identified, the entire group may be excluded for 14 days from the last exposure to an infectious individual.

*Groups are considered to be a classroom, sports team, bus riders, clubs, etc. It is critical that seats and cohort groups are assigned and adhered to, so that contacts can be traced; if contacts cannot be traced and public health measures are not being followed, the entire group may be excluded following a single positive case.

What happens to the group when there is a positive case?

	Exposures	Quarantine
1 case	High-risk activity	14- day home quarantine
1 case	Low-risk activity	No quarantine
2+ cases (with evidence of transmission within the group, meaning individuals begin showing symptoms within 14 days of each other, with no other known exposures)	n/a	Consult with Miami County Health Department- may result in 14- day quarantine for entire group

Exposures outside of the school setting

If a student or staff member is identified as a close contact of a positive individual, no matter the setting in which they were exposed, they are to be excluded for 14 days from their last interaction with the infectious individual.

If an individual is tested during their 14-day quarantine period and is negative for COVID-19, they still need to complete the 14-day quarantine before returning to school, as symptoms can take up to 14 days to develop.

Household Contact

If a household member (sibling, parent, etc.) tests positive for COVID-19, then all other household members must be quarantined at home for 14 days following their last interaction. If the positive individual can isolate in a separate bedroom, ideally with a separate bathroom, and wearing a mask while in the common areas, then the 14 day quarantine begins on the day the positive individual began isolating away from the household. If this is not possible, then household members will need to quarantine for 14 days following the end of the positive individuals' infectious period (10 days after symptom onset and 24 hours after fever resolution and symptom improvement). This may mean that family members are quarantined for 24+ days (10 days + 14 days). If additional household members become symptomatic/test positive during the isolation or quarantine period, count starts over (see attached document).

Presumed Positive

Individuals with a known exposure to a COVID-19 positive individual who become symptomatic are presumed positive. They should already be in quarantine. Becoming symptomatic/presumed positive should trigger a move from quarantine to isolation. Contact tracing activities should begin at school/ Miami County Health Department. The individual should be encouraged to get confirmatory testing.

Contacts of Contacts

If an individual is notified that they are a close contact of a COVID-19 positive individual, only that person who was directly exposed needs to quarantine. Other family members (e.g., siblings) do not need to quarantine if they did not have contact with the infected individual.

Travel

Families and staff planning out-of-state travel should check KDHE's Quarantine guidelines. Students and staff can return to school, work, and extracurricular activities after traveling to a location on this list only after a 14-day quarantine period.

<https://www.coronavirus.kdheks.gov/175/Travel-Exposure-Related-Isolation-Quaran>

Notification Following a COVID-19 Positive

While Miami County Health Department is not recommending exclusion of children when there is a positive in the classroom (if both parties are appropriately masked), it is recommended that families be notified of the positive and encouraged to monitor their children for signs and symptoms of COVID-19. Depending on current workload, Miami County Health Department may ask assistance from KDHE to conduct case/ contact investigations so that laboratory-confirmed cases and close contacts can be identified and notified in a timely fashion.