

BALTIMORE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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September 8, 2021

Dear Team BCPS,

As a system, we are committed to preserving and protecting in-person learning while providing a safe and nurturing learning environment for students and staff. This communication will provide information on our current practices related to quarantine, isolation, contact tracing, and continuity of instruction during periods of quarantine and isolation.

As a reminder, the most complete and accurate data about COVID-19 transmission in schools can be found on the [data dashboard](#), located, with other important information, on our website at www.bcps.org. Information for the previous week is compiled on Monday and typically available on the dashboard each Tuesday.

Quarantine is used to keep someone *who may have been exposed to COVID-19* away from others. These individuals may or may not get sick. Persons in quarantine should stay home for the duration of their quarantine period, limit their contact with others, and monitor themselves closely for symptoms of COVID-19.

Isolation is the separation of individuals with COVID-19 from others. Persons in isolation need to stay home and separate themselves from others as much as possible.

Contact Tracing is the process of identifying those who may have come into contact with an individual with an infectious disease. The process involves identifying individuals who have been infected, determining who they have been in close contact with while infectious, and asking individuals who are potentially infected to stay home (quarantine) until it is clear they are not sick.

How BCPS Responds to Students or Staff with Symptoms of COVID-19

Students or staff members who demonstrate any one of the following COVID-19 symptoms should stay home, consult with their health care provider, and get tested if recommended by the health care provider.

- Fever of 100 degrees or higher
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- New onset of severe headache, especially with fever
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Vomiting or diarrhea

A student who develops COVID-19 symptoms in school will be offered testing and sent home from school. If the test is negative, the student should remain home until they feel better. Students who are not tested and/or students who require PCR testing will be required to remain home from school

until they receive a negative test and feel better. If they are never tested, they must stay home for 10 days or until a health care provider writes a note identifying a specific alternate diagnosis.

How BCPS Responds to Students or Staff with Positive COVID-19 Tests – Isolation

When a student or staff member is diagnosed with COVID-19, they are asked to follow the practices below:

- Isolate at home. Return to school is permitted when:
 - At least 10 days since symptoms first appeared; *and*
 - At least 24 hours with no fever without fever-reducing medication; *and*
 - Other symptoms of COVID-19 are improving.

Persons with COVID-19 are encouraged to continue to follow healthy practices at home to prevent further spread among household members, including frequent and thorough hand washing, disinfecting “high-touch” surfaces, avoiding contact with other members of the household, and wearing a mask if they must be around other people in the home. Persons with COVID-19 are strongly encouraged to answer the call or text from MD COVID or (240) 466-4488 to help Maryland contact tracers slow the spread of COVID-19.

How BCPS Responds When a Person with COVID-19 Has Been at School – Contact Tracing

Contact tracing begins with an interview of the positive COVID-19 patient (or their parent/guardian) to obtain details regarding the patient’s activities when potentially contagious and persons with whom they had close contact.

BCPS is currently following the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) definition of a “close contact” which is defined as follows:

- Being within 6 feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period.
 - The exposure period starts 2 days before illness onset (or, for asymptomatic patients, 2 days prior to test specimen collection) until the time the patient is isolated.
 - The cumulative total can be determined by adding individual exposures over a 24-hour period (e.g., three 5-minute exposures for a total of 15 minutes).
- **Except**, when students are fully masked, close contact does not occur unless the students are within 3 feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period.

BCPS contact tracing looks for close contacts in the classroom, cafeteria, bus, and extra-curricular activities. BCPS does NOT conduct contact tracing for non-school activities such as daycare and outside recreational events.

When all contacts have been notified, BCPS principals issue a community notice about the case to students and staff who were in the building at the time the person was potentially contagious.

Length of Quarantine for Unvaccinated Persons

In general, persons will be placed on quarantine for 10 days from the last date of exposure as long as they do not develop symptoms. A shortened quarantine period is possible if a test conducted 5 full days after the last exposure is negative. In this case, the person may return after 7 days of quarantine or as soon as the test result is received (but no sooner than 7 days.) Students who are not able to consistently wear a mask in school must quarantine for 14 days.

Quarantine Guidelines for Fully Vaccinated Persons

Fully vaccinated persons are not required to quarantine. They should monitor themselves for symptoms for 14 days after the exposure; if symptoms develop, they should stay home and get tested. As long as they have no symptoms, they may continue their daily activities with one restriction: they should wear a mask whenever in indoor settings outside of their home for 14 days after their last exposure. In addition, the CDC recommends that fully vaccinated persons with exposure to COVID-19 be tested 3-5 days following a known exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19. Fully vaccinated people who live in a household with someone who is immunosuppressed, at increased risk of severe disease, or unvaccinated (including children <12 years of age) may want to consider masking at home for 14 days following a known exposure or until they receive a negative test result.

Access to Instruction During a COVID Exclusion

The information below outlines what families can expect regarding access to instruction if a student needs to be excluded from school due to COVID illness or COVID quarantine or isolation as indicated by a health professional.

- If the excluded student **IS** part of an entire class of excluded students who stay together as a class throughout the entire school day:
 - Principal will provide communication regarding access to instruction inclusive of technology and materials needed.
 - Instruction for the class will take place virtually during the school day with the student's teacher(s).
 - Families will receive a "virtual" school day schedule for students to access instruction.

- If the excluded student **IS NOT** part of an entire class of excluded students who stay together as a class throughout the entire school day:
 - Principal will provide communication regarding access to learning inclusive of technology and materials needed.
 - Students will receive asynchronous work to complete through Schoology OR they will receive paper/pencil work to complete during the school day.
 - Supplemental learning will be provided. Students will have the opportunity to work with a BCPS teacher tutor outside of school hours.
 - A schedule for access to tutoring services will be provided to families. Tutoring will take place through Google Meet.

Preserving and protecting in-person learning requires our entire community to work together. COVID-19 is spread in three main ways:

- Breathing in air when close to an infected person who is exhaling small droplets and particles that contain the virus.
- Having these small droplets and particles that contain virus land on the eyes, nose, or mouth, especially through splashes and sprays like a cough or sneeze.
- Touching eyes, nose, or mouth with hands that have the virus on them.

We can prevent and slow the spread of COVID-19 at home and in school by:

- Getting vaccinated – Students too young to be vaccinated are less likely to catch COVID-19 if they live in a home where others are vaccinated. To find a vaccination clinic near you, please visit the [Baltimore County COVID-19 Vaccine Hub](#) or the [Maryland COVID Vaccine website](#).

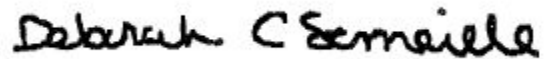
- Staying home
 - If you are sick, talk to your health care provider to see if you should be tested.
 - If you are waiting for test results for COVID-19, alert your school nurse.
 - If you have had recent close contact with a person with COVID-19, alert your school nurse.
 - If you have been diagnosed with COVID-19, alert your school nurse.
- Wearing a mask that covers your mouth and nose.
- Practicing social distancing at all times and avoiding crowds.
- Avoiding contact with people who are sick.
- Following good hygiene practices like:
 - Washing your hands often with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds.
 - Using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol if soap and water are not available.
 - Covering your coughs and sneezes with a tissue, your sleeve, or your elbow.
 - Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.

The CDC has provided additional information about [Quarantine and Isolation](#) and [Contact Tracing in Schools](#). We will continue to provide community updates as we, in partnership with our health partners, respond to shifting metrics related to COVID-19 transmission.

Sincerely,



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Chief of School Climate and Safety



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