



Executive Summary: Key Takeaways and Updates

Guidelines for the Prevention, Investigation, and Control of COVID-19 Outbreaks in K-12 Schools in Wisconsin

On January 6, 2022, the Center’s for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued updated K-12 school guidance to reflect new isolation and quarantine recommendations for people who have been diagnosed with or exposed to COVID-19. The Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) released updated [Guidelines for the Prevention, Investigation, and Control of COVID-19 Outbreaks in K-12 Schools in Wisconsin](#) to include the latest recommendations from the CDC. This guidance also reflects changes from DHS memo [BCD 2022-01](#) that went into immediate effect on January 21, 2022. DHS recommends that local and tribal health departments (LTHDs) use this guidance as they work with school administrators to ensure the health and safety of students, teachers, school staff, and the broader community. This guidance was developed with input from multiple sources, including the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI).

Key Takeaways

- DHS recommends that schools layer multiple prevention strategies to protect students, teachers, administrators, and staff.
- Vaccination remains the leading strategy to prevent new cases and to keep schools operating safely.
- DHS, in alignment with CDC, recommends well-fitting masks be worn by students, teachers, and school staff, regardless of vaccination status.
- In addition to universal masking, students should maintain at least 3 feet of physical distance between other students within classrooms to reduce the spread of disease.
- Screening testing is especially important in K-12 settings where school-aged children are more likely to have mild or asymptomatic infection than adults. Screening testing can add assurance that schools remain open safely for in-person learning, sports, and extracurricular activities.
- Improving ventilation systems, promoting hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette, and cleaning and disinfection remain important layers of prevention to keep schools safe.
- LTHDs should continue to work with school administrators to investigate suspected and confirmed COVID-19 outbreaks in K-12 school settings.
- Students, teachers, and school staff should continue to isolate and quarantine when necessary.

Summary of Key Updates

- The length of isolation and quarantine has been shortened to five days in alignment with [CDC guidance](#). Individuals who are up to date on their vaccines do not need to quarantine unless they develop symptoms but should get tested 5 days after exposure and wear a well-fitting mask when around others for 10 full days. Previously, individuals that were fully vaccinated were exempt from quarantine.
- Students, teachers, and staff are considered up to date on recommended COVID-19 vaccinations if they have received all the doses for which they are eligible **and** it has been at least 14 days since their final dose of a primary series or an additional dose for immunocompromised persons, or immediately after administration of a booster dose.
- People who are up to date on recommended COVID-19 vaccinations are exempt from screening testing unless they are experiencing symptoms. This exemption previously applied to those who were fully vaccinated.
- Schools may consider [test-to-stay](#) as an option for keeping asymptomatic close contacts who are not up to date on recommended COVID-19 vaccinations and do not test positive for COVID-19 in the classroom as an alternative to traditional quarantine.
- A suspected outbreak of COVID-19 in a school is defined as the presence of at least two confirmed or **probable cases** of COVID-19 in the same school building, with onset dates within 14 days of each other.
- If two or more confirmed or **probable cases** of COVID-19 are identified in the school with onset dates within 14 days of each other, and the public health investigation identifies an epidemiologic link between the illnesses and the school (for example, close contact occurred at school, multiple illnesses in the same room, shared staff member among cases), the outbreak is then a confirmed COVID-19 outbreak associated with the school.
- While case and contact interviews are no longer required, guidelines are included if the school or LTHD decide to conduct them. At minimum, known cases should be excluded from school and provided isolation guidance and identified close contacts should be informed and quarantined as recommended.
- Some masks and respirators may offer more protection than others. It is recommended that students, teachers, and staff wear the most protective mask or respirator that fits well and that they can wear comfortably for long periods of time. Universal wearing of well-fitting masks is recommended for all students, teachers, and staff, regardless of vaccination status.
- Physical distancing should be implemented in schools in which not everyone is up to date on recommended COVID-19 vaccinations.

These recommendations are not exhaustive. School-level assessment should be made by LTHDs in consultation with school administration, DPI, and epidemiologists at DHS. Intervention and control measures should be based on the most recent guidance available from local, state, and federal public health and regulatory authorities.