

Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH) School Reopening FAQ

November 23, 2020

CCDPH Role & Support

How can we communicate with CCDPH? (Question from CCSD15)

At this time, we are unable to provide individual return-to-school letters for students, teachers, and school staff. Please be sure to alert your school health professional if your child has tested positive for COVID-19 or is in quarantine following a COVID-19 exposure. CCDPH will provide release information directly to your school health professional. Please contact them if you have any questions or concerns about this process.

General questions about guidance can be emailed to us at:

ccdphcovid19@cookcountyhhs.org

Can CCDPH send staff to our schools to tour our buildings for compliance?

Unfortunately, we will not be able to send staff to each school building.

Will the health department review our school plans?

Our role is to assist schools with guidance but we are unable to review individual school plans.

What is the health department's role with Adaptive Pause?

CCDPH will:

- Consult with schools about metrics, and to help vet proposed school interventions.
- Monitor 19 Risk Metrics available on the IDPH website and point schools to other data to help guide school decision making
- Monitor and track the local epidemiology within neighboring counties and in neighboring states, including relevant county test positivity, case rates, and qualitative information such as significant outbreaks.
- Monitor the level of transmission in the community so local-level decisions can be made about implementing school-based strategies

Where can I see metrics related to Adaptive Pause?

County Level Risk Metrics (Is my County blue or orange?):

<http://dph.illinois.gov/countymetrics?county=Cook>

School Adaptive Pause metrics:

<https://www.dph.illinois.gov/countyschool?county=Cook>

Additional metrics:

Local case counts: <https://ccdphcd.shinyapps.io/covid19/>

Zip-code level data: <https://www.dph.illinois.gov/covid19/covid19-statistics>

Metrics are only part of the picture. ISBE's [Adaptive Pause guidance](#) states that “strategies should aim to balance educational needs and the reduction of COVID-19 transmission”. A color change for suburban Cook County that warrants intervention may result in different responses among schools in the same area, depending on the school's resources, student population, staff capacity, and other factors. CCDPH can support schools if the data is confusing or does not provide a clear direction.

Symptom Checking

What are the requirements for symptom checking?

Please see [ISBE Part 3 Transition Guidance FAQ](#), question 20.

What if a child has symptoms? (North Brook District #27, District 128)

Please see [ISBE Part 3 Transition Guidance FAQ](#), question 20, starting at “Individuals who have a temperature...”.

What if a child only has one symptom? (District 64)

Please see [IDPH Schools FAQs](#), p.2, first question.

What if the person who is sick has a known condition, such as allergies, migraine, etc., can this be taken into consideration?

Please see [IDPH Schools FAQs](#), p.2, third question.

What actions should be taken by students or staff that are sent home with COVID-like symptoms?

Please see [IDPH Schools FAQs](#), p.1, first question.

What kind of information should be asked in the absence line?

Please see [ISBE's Part 3 Transition Joint Guidance](#), “Illness and Diagnoses Monitoring”, page 43.

CCDPH asks that schools only call the health department if they receive a report of a confirmed case.

Should we keep the absence logs?

If you keep absence logs with details, please keep them for the duration of the pandemic in case the information is needed.

Illness at School

What if a child develops symptoms at school?

Please see [ISBE Part 3 Transition Guidance FAQ](#), question 26.

Case Reporting & Contact Tracing

How should I report a case to the health department? (Prospect Heights 23)

To report a confirmed case to CCDPH, call 708-836-8699.

- Please designate one person to be your school's point of contact with CCDPH.
- Alert CCDPH once you have confirmation of a positive case among students, staff, or faculty.
 - Be ready to provide:
 - The positive case name, date of birth, phone number, parent/guardian information, and last day of school attendance
 - If symptomatic, please include the date the person began to feel ill
 - Date of test, provider, and/or testing site
- CCDPH will assist you with quarantine and isolation guidance, determining who is a close contact, next steps, and contact tracing

When a school sends email wanting to report a positive case, what information should be requested?

If school representatives (nurses, administrators, principals, superintendents, etc.) need to report cases they need to use a linelist template.

If I have one positive case, do I need to close the school? (Winnetka D36)

Please see [IDPH Schools FAQs](#), p.7, last question on the page and p.8, first question on the page.

A conversation with CCDPH will help you to gather more information and make a determination. The health department will provide specific guidance based on conditions at your school.

Are there alternative strategies to school closure that may be considered or employed?

Please see [IDPH Schools FAQs](#), p.8, first question on the page.

Do I need to let staff and parents know about positive cases?

After reporting and in collaboration with CCDPH, send prompt notification to everyone in the school. Please see [ISBE's Part 3 Transition Joint Guidance](#), "Preparing for When a Student or Staff Member Becomes Sick, page 30.

ISBE has provided a [sample notification letter](#) on their COVID-19 webpage.

Schools cannot share the name of the person who is ill. Please share with parents that if someone is a close contact they will be contacted by the local health department. The health department will provide information on if they need to quarantine and other health recommendations.

What is considered a close contact?

Please see [IDPH Schools FAQs](#), p.2. second question from the bottom of the page.

If the close contact and the COVID case were both wearing their cloth face coverings when the exposure occurred, is the close contact still required to be quarantined?

Please see [IDPH Schools FAQs](#), p.3. third question from the top of the page.

Are schools expected to conduct contact tracing?

No. This is the role of the local health department once a positive case is confirmed. Please encourage teachers, staff, and parents to cooperate when contact tracers call to ask for information. This will assist in slowing the spread of COVID-19.

Will CCDPH provide isolation and quarantine release letters?

At this time, we are unable to provide individual return-to-school letters for students, teachers, and school staff. Please be sure to alert your school health professional if your child has tested positive for COVID-19 or is in quarantine following a COVID-19 exposure. CCDPH will provide release information directly to your school health professional. Please contact them if you have any questions or concerns about this process.

What if the student or staff member does not live in our jurisdiction?

A return letter should be provided by the local health department where the person resides, this includes people that live in Indiana or another state.

If the person can't reach their local health department or their local health department does not issue letters of release, please ask the caller to contact their school nurse or administrator.

Masks & Face Shields

Should masks/face coverings be worn all the time?

Please see [ISBE Part 3 Transition Guidance FAQ](#), question 2.

Are masks/face coverings required when individuals are outside?

Please see [ISBE Part 3 Transition Guidance FAQ](#), question 3.

Can face coverings be removed at certain times?

Please see [IDPH Schools FAQs](#), page 5, last question on the bottom of the page.

Can I use a face shield instead of a mask/face covering?

Please see [IDPH Schools FAQs](#), page 6, second question from the bottom of the page.

Can athletic face coverings, e.g., neck warmers, be used as a substitute for cloth face coverings?

Please see [IDPH Schools FAQs](#), page 7, second question from the top of the page.

PPE

What PPE is required by school nurses who are assessing a student or staff member reporting COVID-like symptoms?

Please see [IDPH Schools FAQs](#), page 6, second question from the top of the page.

What kind of PPE is required for staff who clean areas used by a suspected or known COVID case?

Please see [IDPH Schools FAQs](#), page 7, second question from the bottom of the page.

Can CCDPH help us with fit testing for N95?

CCDPH does not conduct fit testing.

Can CCDPH help us secure N95?

Please see this flyer from ISBE and IEMA about obtaining PPE:

<https://www.isbe.net/Documents/PPE-Info.pdf>

If N95 cannot be obtained, can KN95 be used instead?

Please see this guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/ppe-strategy/international-respirator-purchase.html>

Cleaning and Disinfection

Should our custodians be cleaning differently?

Please see [IDPH Schools FAQs](#), page 9, second question from the bottom of the page.

How should we clean after a positive case?

Please see [IDPH Schools FAQs](#), page 9, last question on the page.

Testing

Should there be mass COVID-19 testing in schools for students and staff? (RTSD26)

No. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention does not recommend mass testing.

Special Situations

How can we prevent transmission in band or music classes?

Please see [IDPH Schools FAQs](#), page 4.

Travel

Should we encourage families and staff to self-quarantine if they have traveled to “hot spots”, including in the US? (D57)

Yes. [CCDPH's travel guidance](#), and a list of states and territories where it applies, is available on our website.

I have teachers that live in Indiana, what should I do if Indiana is added to the travel guidance list?

If your school or district has teachers that live in a state that is added to the hotspot list, then CCDPH strongly recommends that those teachers work from home until that state is removed from the list. If teachers or staff are needed for in-person instruction, then as much as possible, they should provide instruction to children that are not at high risk for serious illness with COVID-19. Any activity that requires removing a mask, such as eating, should be done separately from other teachers, staff, and students. They should also be extra vigilant with physical distancing, mask wearing, and hand washing.