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**July 26, 2021**

### **Return to Pre-K, K-12 Schools and Day Care Programs**

Cook County's community transmission levels are currently at low ([Blue](#)) per IDPH school metrics.<sup>1</sup>

#### **Guidance for individual with symptoms of COVID-19 and return to school: [Row B: Decision Tree for Symptomatic Individuals](#)**

School nurses and/or providers will have to make a clinical decision if there is a high index of suspicion for COVID-19 due to clinical symptoms, refer staff/students for a laboratory-based, confirmatory, non-saliva SARS-CoV-2 NAAT even if the student has a negative rapid antigen or a negative Point of Care (POC) NAAT test result. These clinical symptoms may include one or more symptoms but are not limited to fever, cough, shortness of breath, loss of taste and smell.

Staff members and/or students may return to work/school per school policies and [IDPH Communicable Diseases in Schools](#) provided they have:

1. Mild symptoms and/or alternative diagnosis (test positive for strep or flu)
  2. No exposure to positive case or outbreak at the school
  3. Negative rapid antigen or Point of Care (POC) NAAT test
- The NAAT test must be done initially or within 48 hours following a negative antigen test result or negative rapid molecular (rapid PCR) test result.
  - If the staff/student is a close contact to a confirmed case, and the school is experiencing an outbreak, documentation of a negative NAAT (e.g., RT-PCR) COVID-19 test result is needed.

<sup>1</sup>Laboratory-based confirmatory SARS-CoV-2 NAAT, diagnostic testing for current infection with SARS-CoV-2 must be a reverse-transcriptase PCR (RT-PCR) test or other SARS-CoV-2 confirmatory (NAAT)<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup>If COVID-19 diagnostic testing is not performed due to the clinical judgment of the healthcare provider, an alternate diagnosis **AND** a medical note is needed to return to school/childcare center documenting no clinical suspicion for current COVID-19 infection.

#### References

1. [Cook County COVID-19 Surveillance Data](#)
2. <http://dph.illinois.gov/covid19/community-guidance/provider-guidance-testing>