NEW YORK STATE OF OPPORTUNITY. Department of Health

KATHY HOCHUL
Governor

MARY T. BASSETT, M.D., M.P.H.
Commissioner

KRISTIN M. PROUD
Acting Executive Deputy Commissioner

NYS ED .gov New York State EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Knowledge › Skill › Opportunity

BETTY A. ROSA
Commissioner

August 22, 2022

Dear Colleagues,

Thanks to your ongoing heroic work, schools across New York State have been able to provide in-person instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic while keeping your students and staff safe by using protocols issued by local health departments and school districts.

As we enter a new phase of the pandemic, with increased access to COVID-19 information, vaccination, testing, and treatment, we are changing our guidance to give school districts and schools more flexibility heading into the 2022-2023 school year.

Mitigation Strategies: We jointly encourage school districts and schools to utilize the CDC's Operational Guidance for K-12 Schools and Early Care and Education Programs to Support Safe In-Person Learning as a resource for COVID-19 mitigation strategies in the K-12 setting. This guidance from the CDC represents the most up-to-date COVID-19 mitigation strategies for the K-12 setting while considering COVID-19 Community Levels. Changes to the most current CDC Operational Guidance include:

- Elimination of the test-to-stay policy recommendation.
- Changed recommendations to conduct screening testing to focus on high-risk activities during high COVID-19 Community Levels or in response to an outbreak.
- Removal of the recommendation to pod/cohort.
- Removal of the recommendation to quarantine, except in high-risk congregate settings.
- Addition of detailed information on when to wear a mask, how to manage cases and exposures, and how to respond to outbreaks.

COVID-19 Exposure: When people are exposed to COVID-19, follow the CDC's Exposure Guidance. It is recommended that those exposed to COVID-19 wear a well-fitting mask or respirator for a full 10-day period and get tested at least 5 days after close contact or sooner if symptoms develop. The current guidance holds for all individuals irrespective of vaccination status or history of prior COVID-19 infection.

COVID-19 Symptoms and Positive Test Results: Those who are or become symptomatic and/or test positive for COVID-19 are asked to follow the CDC's Isolation Guidance.

The CDC notes that testing is not required to determine end of isolation following a positive test for COVID-19 infection; however, individuals may use sequential antigen testing, if available, as outlined in CDC's Isolation Guidance to potentially shorten the duration of mask use post-isolation. Those who are not able to wear a well-fitting mask or respirator should either isolate for a full 10 days or follow the test-based strategy to determine when they can return to school without a mask.

Vaccinations: Staying up to date on COVID-19 vaccinations continues to be a leading public health strategy to prevent severe illness. Everyone 6 months of age and older is now eligible for COVID-19 vaccination. All school children who are 5 years of age and older are eligible for a COVID-19 booster. This includes individuals who have been fully vaccinated and have not received an additional vaccination this calendar year. Schools are encouraged to continue promoting COVID-19 vaccination in their community. Information on COVID-19 vaccination can be found at https://covid19vaccine.health.ny.gov/.

Testing: In addition to vaccination, as a best practice, COVID-19 testing provides an opportunity to connect eligible individuals who test positive with treatment. This allows schools to mitigate community spread of COVID-19. Resources continue to be made available to schools to support testing of school populations; an updated list of testing resources can be found at https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/schools-youth.

Following this guidance will help schools collaborate with local departments of health to support safe in-person learning while providing greater flexibility to meet local community needs as COVID-19 Community Levels change.

Reporting: Please note that the requirement to report daily COVID-19 testing and case positive data to the NYSDOH (10 NYCRR 2.9) ended on June 30, 2022 and is not required at this time.

At this time, we will not release further guidance specific to the K-12 setting. However, as the pandemic response continues to evolve with updated information, we will provide updated recommendations as available. The NYSDOH continues to be ready to answer questions by email at SchoolQuestionsCOVID@health.ny.gov. We will continue to use this email address to communicate with you throughout the school year. As such we will periodically ask you to confirm your contact information and update it as needed; we will send instructions on how to do that in the coming weeks.

Thank you again for all you have done and continue to do to keep children safe in school.

Sincerely,

Mary T. Bassett, M.D., M.P.H
Commissioner of Health

Betty A. Rosa, Ed.D.
Commissioner of Education