



SCHOOL & COLLEGE LEGAL SERVICES OF CALIFORNIA

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LEGAL UPDATE

January 26, 2022

To: Superintendents, Member School Districts (K-12)
From: Jennifer Henry, Associate General Counsel *JH*
Subject: CDPH Revises its K-12 Schools Guidance to Give a New Group Tracing Notification Option for Student Exposures
Memo No. 06-2022

On January 12, 2022, the California Department of Public Health (“CDPH”) revised its COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for K-12 Schools in California, 2021-22 School Year.¹ CDPH revised its student quarantine guidance and provided a new “Group Tracing” Notification process as a less onerous option to pre-existing quarantine and contact tracing guidelines for K-12 students.² Attached at the end of this Legal Update is CDPH’s sample Group Tracing Notification letter to Parents/Guardians for Student Exposures.

A student “close contact” is defined as more than 15 minutes over a 24 hour period within six feet in an indoor space (including on buses) at school (“exposure”). For students who have been exposed at school to a person who tested positive, K-12 schools can now follow one of the two options:

STUDENT EXPOSURE QUARANTINE RULES (OPTION A):

-For Vaccinated Students, or Students who had a COVID-19 infection within last 90 days, who are Exposed: No quarantine needed unless have symptoms or test positive. Wear a mask for 10 days.

-For Unvaccinated Students who are Exposed – Both Parties Wearing a Mask: No quarantine needed if, for 10 days after, are asymptomatic, undergo twice weekly testing, and excluded from extracurricular school activities (including sports) and community activities – OR – quarantine for five days and return after Day 5 if asymptomatic and a negative test from Day 5 or later.

¹ <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/K-12-Guidance-2021-22-School-Year.aspx>.

² <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/Group-Tracing-Approach-to-Students-Exposed-to-COVID-19.aspx>.



-For Unvaccinated Students who are Exposed – Unmasked: Stay home for 5 days, can return if no symptoms AND tests negative; and should wear a mask until day 10. Otherwise, stay home for 10 days.

GROUP TRACING NOTIFICATION (OPTION B):

After an exposure (shared indoor space for over 15 minutes in a 24 hour period with a positive case at school), K-12 schools can send a notice to parents of “groups” of exposed students (classmates, sports teammates, extracurricular cohorts, etc.) in lieu of contact tracing. Regardless of vaccination or prior infection status, or whether masked, students do not have to quarantine unless they develop symptoms or test positive. Students are strongly recommended to get tested 3-5 days after exposure. Students must continue to wear a mask indoors. Exposed students must participate in testing in order to take part in sports and extracurricular activities.

*Please note that, as of January 8, 2022, for students or employees who test positive, CDPH recommends staying home for at least five days, regardless of vaccination status, previous COVID-19 infection, or lack of symptoms. Isolation can end after Day 5 if asymptomatic and a negative test from Day 5 or later, and the individual stays masked indoors through Day 10. Otherwise, the individual is to stay home through Day 10.³

Please contact our office with questions regarding this Legal Update or any other legal matter.

The information in this Legal Update is provided as a summary of law and is not intended as legal advice. Application of the law may vary depending on the particular facts and circumstances at issue. We, therefore, recommend that you consult legal counsel to advise you on how the law applies to your specific situation.

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³ <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/Guidance-on-Isolation-and-Quarantine-for-COVID-19-Contact-Tracing.aspx>.

[District letterhead]

**Sample Notification Letter to Parents/Guardians
of Students Exposed to COVID-19 in School¹**

[Date]

Dear Parent/Guardian:

[INSERT School Name] considers the health and well-being of our students and staff a priority. We have been alerted that your child may have been exposed to an individual diagnosed with COVID-19. We are following public health recommendations to ensure that the person with COVID-19 follows instructions for isolation and remains away from others until they can safely return to school. The individual with COVID-19 was in school while infectious on [INSERT Date(s)].

What does this mean for you and your child?

- **Your child may remain in school unless they develop symptoms or test positive for COVID-19.** Being exposed to somebody with COVID-19 does not necessarily mean that your child will become infected. In fact, scientific research, and experience from around the country – including from California during this school year – demonstrate that schools remain among the safest places for children to be.
- **Your child should get tested for COVID-19 [INSERT DATES, within 3-5 days after the last date that the individual with COVID-19 was in school], or sooner if your child starts to show symptoms.²** You may get tested at [INSERT local school or community testing resources] or at a testing site near you.³ Over-the-counter (at-home) tests may also be used.
- **If your child develops symptoms of COVID-19⁴ or tests positive for COVID-19, please ensure they isolate⁵ at home immediately and notify us right away at [INSERT school contact information].** When you notify us, we can take additional steps to keep our school community safe.
- **Your child must continue to wear a mask** indoors in the school and community per school, local, and state requirements. Follow school policies to protect against COVID-19. High-quality masks⁶ with the best fit and filtration will provide the best protection for your child and the school community.

¹ To download the original CDPH draft click here:

<https://cdphdata.maps.arcgis.com/sharing/rest/content/items/270702ded829456fb022d085dfcf79da/data>.

² <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>.

³ <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/Nearby/index.html?appid=43118dc0d5d348d8ab20a81967a15401>.

⁴ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>.

⁵ <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/Guidance-on-Isolation-and-Quarantine-for-COVID-19-Contact-Tracing.aspx>.

⁶ <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/Get-the-Most-out-of-Masking.aspx>.

- **If you haven't done so yet, your child should get vaccinated against COVID-19.** If your child is 12 years of age or older, a booster dose is recommended five months after the second dose. Vaccinations against COVID-19 remain the best way to protect against the spread of this virus and against severe disease. Make an appointment to get vaccinated⁷ or contact your child's doctor or healthcare provider to learn more.

We will continue to provide you with regular updates as needed. Note that infections diagnosed in students and school staff are not necessarily the result of exposure at school when safety protocols are followed at school, and COVID-19 transmission remains much more likely to occur outside of school settings.

We encourage you to contact us with questions and concerns. Please call us at **[INSERT Number]**, email us at **[INSERT Email]**, or visit our website **[INSERT School Website]** for updates.

Please be assured that we are committed to facilitating an optimal learning experience ensuring the safety of our students and staff.

Sincerely,
[INSERT Name, Title, and Contact information]

⁷ <https://myturn.ca.gov/>.