Back to School Guidance

Fall 2021

The Indiana Department of Health has issued these recommendations following the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools on safely returning to in-person instruction for the 2021-22 school year.

Local school boards are responsible — in collaboration with local health and community officials — for implementing routine measures and restrictions deemed necessary and prudent to address the impact and spread of COVID-19 for their buildings, facilities and grounds, including transportation, except as required by federal or state authority:

1. **Per CDC order, individuals are required to wear masks on public transportation, including school buses, even if fully vaccinated. Information regarding this federal CDC order can be found here.**
2. **COVID-19 is a reportable communicable disease, and as such, falls under the provision of the *Communicable Disease Reporting Rule* *(410 IAC 1-2.5).*** Under this rule, state and local health departments have the authority to implement prevention and control measures, including contact tracing, isolation and quarantine, for disease cases and outbreaks. Schools are required to report positive COVID-19 cases in much the same manner as other communicable diseases in the school environment, such as chicken pox and measles. Once COVID-19 cases are identified in a school, they must be reported to the local health department and entered into the K-12 Gateway portal.

The CDC updated its Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools on July 9. The state Department of Health has adopted this guidance for the 2021-22 school year, and educational governing bodies are encouraged to follow this guidance. The guidance, summarized below, includes layered mitigation strategies to decrease the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

K-12 Schools:

- **Unvaccinated staff and students**
  - Masks recommended indoors (except when eating)
  - Keep social distance of at least 3 feet if all (unvaccinated) individuals are masked
  - Keep social distance of at least 6 feet in all other areas of the school or if unmasked
  - Quarantine is required if individual has had close contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19 (see below)
- **Vaccinated staff and students**
  - Masks are not necessary
  - Use good judgment regarding social distancing
  - No quarantine needed if identified as a close contact as long as individual remains asymptomatic (monitor for symptoms)

Track and Isolate Positive Cases:

- Individuals who test positive for COVID-19 must stay home for 10 days following the onset of symptoms or a positive test result and must be 24 hours fever free without fever reducing medications and symptoms improved before returning from isolation.

An individual is a close contact if UNVACCINATED and meets one of the following:

- If anyone in the classroom is unmasked and individual is within 6 feet of a person who has tested positive for COVID-19 for a total of 15 minutes or more within a 24-hour period
- If all individuals are masked in the classroom, an individual is a close contact only if fewer than 3 feet from the person who tested positive for COVID-19 for a total of 15 minutes or more in a 24-hour period
- In all other areas of the school environment, any unvaccinated individuals within 6 feet of a person diagnosed with COVID-19 for a total of 15 minutes or more in a 24-hour period

Quarantine:

- ***Vaccinated*** close contacts do not have to quarantine but should monitor for symptoms, isolate and get tested if symptoms develop.
- ***Unvaccinated*** individuals who are identified as a close contact must quarantine.
  - ***Asymptomatic close contacts*** may return on day 8 (with specific negative testing and precautions), day 11 (with precautions), or day 15 (without testing or precautions).

Report:

- Schools must report all positive cases and close contacts to their local health department
- Schools must enter positive cases and close contacts into the IDOH K-12 Gateway portal.

All guidance is subject to change as CDC and other expert guidance changes. Please email questions to backtoschool@isdh.in.gov.