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Memo

To: Pre K-12 School Administrators

From: Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH)

Date: October 26, 2021

Subject: Guidance Updates per Executive Order (EO) 21-105

RIDOH is writing to share updated guidance about COVID-19 prevention strategies for Pre K-12 schools regarding close contacts.

Quarantine and Testing for School-related Close Contacts

COVID-19 spread inside schools remains limited due to layered prevention strategies in a structured setting. EO 21-105 reflects updated requirements for testing for close contacts in line with CDC guidance updates. The updates also provide flexibility for Pre K-12 students and staff identified as close contacts due to a school-related exposure.

- **Fully vaccinated students and staff identified as close contacts must get tested 5-7 days after the date of exposure**, wear a mask in public indoor settings for 14 days or until they receive a negative test result, and self-monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 for 14 days following the close contact.
- **Not fully vaccinated students and staff identified as close contacts must get tested immediately after being identified as a close contact and, if negative, get tested again 5-7 days after last exposure or immediately if symptoms develop during quarantine.** All non-fully vaccinated close contacts must self-monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 for 14 days following close contact.
- **Not fully vaccinated students and staff identified as close contacts must immediately self-quarantine for 10 days following the close contact unless one of the following exemptions applies:**
 - The person doesn't have symptoms and previously had COVID-19 no more than 90 days prior to the last date of close contact; or

- The person meets all of the **Pre K-12 close contact exception** criteria:
 - The close contact and infected person are both pre K-12 students;
 - Exposure occurred inside a pre K-12 classroom or structured outdoor pre K-12 setting where mask use can be observed (i.e., holding class outdoors with supervision);
 - Both students wore face masks at all times; and
 - Students were at least 3 feet apart from each other at all times; or
- The person is a pre K-12 student or staff member and the exposure occurred at **outdoor recess** at a pre K-12 school; or
- The exposure occurred on a pre K-12 **school bus** where windows were open, all persons on the bus wore face masks, and there was at least one other adult in addition to the driver present to monitor masks were worn and windows were open; or
- The student and staff close contacts are from a Rhode Island school which has agreed to the State's **Test to Stay Pilot Program (TTS)**, the district has entered into a written agreement with RIDOH to implement the TTS quarantine protocol, and they have consented to participate in TTS. Students and staff using the TTS quarantine protocol must self-quarantine at home when they're not attending school or school-related extracurricular activities.

Promoting Vaccination

Vaccination remains the most powerful strategy to keep children and families healthy and students learning and involved in extracurricular activities in person. **Fully vaccinated students and staff who aren't showing symptoms are exempt from quarantine.** RIDOH strongly encourages all eligible students, staff, and families vaccinated. From August 29 to October 16, 1,950 out of 2,120 Pre K-12 in-school student cases were in unvaccinated students: **Since the start of school, 92% of the students with COVID-19 infection are unvaccinated.**

Note: LEAs are encouraged to consider Centers for Disease Prevention & Control (CDC) and RIDOH recommendations when implementing COVID-19 prevention strategies, as well as current applicable laws: [federal law](#) requiring masks on public transportation, such as school buses, and Executive Orders requiring universal indoor [masking](#) in public K-12 schools and [quarantine and isolation](#).