



COVID-19 Update for PreK-12 School Administrators April 21, 2022



Over the past several weeks, COVID-19 transmission rates have been steadily increasing throughout Connecticut and surrounding states. Given these increases, which may be driven in part by recent holidays, school breaks, and associated travel, schools should plan for an increase in COVID-19 cases in their school communities over the next several weeks. The Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) and State Department of Education (CSDE) are providing this update to school administrators to remind them of the mitigation strategies and other tools the State continues to make available to reduce the risk of transmission and/or outbreaks in their schools and to provide additional information that they can share with school staff and families to help reduce risk even further. Please also refer to the joint DPH/CSDE guidance issued on February 18, 2022: [Considerations Regarding School COVID-19 Policies and Practices](#). During times of increased COVID-19 transmission either inside schools, associated with school activities, or in the wider community, school administrators can help reduce risks by:

Hosting vaccination clinics that are open to staff, students, and families during non-school hours and/or associated with school events or activities. State-sponsored COVID-19 mobile vaccination clinic providers (“yellow vans”) can provide vaccinations to all eligible age groups and offer both primary and booster vaccine doses. For more information, please email Dave.Reyes@ct.gov.

Keeping sick individuals out of school by strictly enforcing policies requiring students/staff with any [symptoms potentially related to COVID-19](#), or who [should be isolating or quarantining](#) based on a positive test or exposure, to temporarily refrain from in-person learning or extracurricular activities.

Encouraging frequent testing either by enrolling your district schools in [Project COVID DeteCT \(SchoolCovidTesting@ct.gov\)](#) and/or by distributing at-home test kits to students and staff and encouraging them to use those kits if they:

- feel unwell or have any symptoms associated with COVID-19; or
- have had an exposure to someone suspected of having COVID-19; or
- have spent a significant amount of time in very close contact with groups of people, such as during holiday gatherings or recent travel.

To request more test kits from the State to distribute to your school communities, please visit: <https://veoci.com/v/p/195646/workflow/4ccrzbzms5d4>

In mask-optional settings, supporting and respecting the decisions of staff and students who choose to use masks during the school day or at school functions, including but not limited to the following situations:

- inside classrooms with medically fragile students or staff;
- in areas of the school where large numbers of students have frequent close contact;
- during staff meetings or when interacting with visitors; and
- at school-sponsored performances and other indoor events.

Increasing available ventilation by adjusting central mechanical ventilation systems to maximize fresh air into the system, opening windows in classrooms without central ventilation systems if the weather allows, and providing/encouraging the use of outdoor spaces for instruction, meal service and gatherings as appropriate.

Reporting all cases of COVID-19 among students and staff through the state DPH reporting portal, and communicating with local health departments: regarding any suspected in-school transmission or outbreaks; to discuss current local COVID-19 conditions that may affect schools; and for additional guidance as needed.

Communicating clearly and consistently with students, staff, and families about the current COVID-19 policies, procedures, and expectations in place districtwide and within individual schools.

Sample Messaging from School Administration to Staff, Students, and Families

April 21, 2022

TO: The XYZ School District Community

The Connecticut Department of Public Health has advised school administrators throughout the state that COVID-19 transmission rates have been steadily increasing and that we should expect to see more cases of COVID-19 affecting students and staff in our schools in the coming weeks due to recent holiday gatherings and travel associated with school break weeks. Our district is discussing how we can enhance mitigation strategies (e.g., increasing ventilation, enhancing cleaning protocols, etc.) in our schools to help reduce COVID-19 risks during this time of increased community transmission but we are also asking our staff, students, and families to help us reduce potential COVID-19 risks even further over the next several weeks by:

- **Staying home if you feel unwell** and especially if you are experiencing any symptoms that could be caused by COVID-19, including:
 - Fever or chills
 - Cough
 - Difficulty breathing
 - Fatigue/tiredness
 - Muscle or body aches
 - Headache
 - New loss of taste or smell
 - Sore throat
 - Congestion or runny nose
 - Nausea or vomiting
 - Diarrhea
- **Getting vaccinated** for COVID-19 if you have not done so already and getting a booster vaccine dose if you are eligible.
- **Testing for COVID-19** either using an at-home test kit or at a pharmacy or other testing site if you:
 - feel unwell or have any symptoms that could be associated with COVID-19; or
 - have had an exposure to someone suspected of having COVID-19; or
 - have recently traveled out of state using public transportation (e.g., air, train, bus); or
 - have attended any large group events (e.g., concerts, weddings or similar events, etc.)
- **Contacting the school nurse and following isolation guidance** if you test positive for COVID-19, including remaining away from school activities for at least 5 days and wearing a mask when returning for an additional 5 days.
- **[Following quarantine guidance](#)** as appropriate for your vaccination status if you have a close contact with someone with COVID-19 either inside or outside of your household.
- **Wear a mask** when you are around other people especially if:
 - you are not feeling well;
 - are advised to do so based on isolation or quarantine recommendations;
 - you are at-risk for severe COVID-19 complications; or
 - you feel more comfortable wearing a mask at this time.