Santa Clara County PUBLIC HEALTH

Revised September 7, 2022

Dear Santa Clara County School Administrators,

Thank you for all that you do to help our community stay safe so children can continue in-person learning. We truly appreciate all your efforts to modify your school environments and everyday routine to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 and save lives.

Exclusion from School

According to the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), persons who have symptoms of COVID-19 or have tested positive for COVID-19 should be instructed to stay at home and **must not** attend school or work in-person.

Upon learning that a school employee or student has been instructed to isolate or stay home, you are encouraged to provide access to sick leave, telework, distance learning support, or other accommodations, without requiring individual documentation from a doctor or nurse.

Criteria for Returning to School After Having COVID-19 Symptoms

If a student or staff person has COVID-like symptoms that may be common to a variety of illnesses, the person should be excluded from school until tested. Families are encouraged to provide test results to the school.

Individuals who test *positive* for COVID-19 may provide documentation of their positive test result to indicate their need for exclusion from in-person learning during their period of isolation.

If the test result is *negative*, the symptomatic student or staff member should remain at home until 24 hours have passed since resolution of any fever (without the use of fever-reducing medications) and other symptoms have improved. Negative test results may be provided to the school to facilitate return to the classroom.

Criteria for Returning to School After Testing Positive for COVID-19

Staff or students who tested positive for COVID-19 (regardless of vaccination status, previous infection, or lack of symptoms) may return to school if:

- it has been at least 5 days since their symptoms started (or, if asymptomatic, at least 5 days since the date their positive COVID-19 test was collected), AND
- if symptomatic, their symptoms have improved, AND
- at least 24 hours have passed since their last fever, without the use of fever-reducing medications, AND
- a COVID-19 test* collected on Day 5 or later is negative.

**When testing to end isolation, it is recommended to use an antigen test (often called a rapid test).*

If they are unwilling or unable to test on Day 5 or later, they should continue to isolate through Day 10. Day 0 is the date of symptom onset (or date of first positive test, if asymptomatic). If fever is still present on Day

10 or symptoms are not resolving, continue isolation until fever-free for 24 hours and symptoms are resolving.

CDPH strongly recommends wearing a mask around others through Day 10. Staff should refer to Cal/OSHA for additional requirements.

Guidelines for Students and Staff Exposed to COVID-19

In general, students and staff who are close contacts to a COVID-19 case AND are asymptomatic may remain at school, but they should get tested 3-5 days after exposure. They are also strongly recommended to wear a mask for 10 days whenever near others. If symptoms develop, isolate and test right away. Exceptions and other considerations may apply.

Please see CDPH's COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for K-12 Schools for more information. Staff should refer to Cal/OSHA for additional requirements.

Testing

Antigen tests (often called *rapid tests* or *at-home tests*) are recommended as the primary option for detecting COVID-19 in schools, as well as when testing to end isolation. A PCR test, antigen test, or any Over-the-Counter at-home test is acceptable for diagnosing COVID-19.

Close contacts who were infected with SARS-CoV-2 within 90 days prior to their current exposure do not need to get tested unless they develop *new* symptoms of COVID-19.

Medical Notes and Clearances

Both the CDC and the Santa Clara County Public Health Department (PHD) **discourage employers and schools from requiring a medical note from a doctor or healthcare provider for clearance to return to work or school after an individual has COVID-19**. These notes create unnecessary hardships for employees and students and their healthcare providers. Employees and students are considered no longer contagious when they meet the criteria described above.

Your employee or student who had, or was a close contact of someone who had, COVID-19 may print this letter out to: 1) indicate the need to isolate (when coupled with a positive test result), 2) show proof that they can return to work or school as long as they meet the criteria above (detailed further at sccgov.org/schools).

Thank you for all that you do to keep our community healthy.