

DEFIANCE COUNTY SCHOOLS: QUARANTINE EXPOSURE GUIDELINES UPDATED BY THE OHIO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH 10/25/2021

Quarantining students at home who have been exposed to COVID-19 in a school environment has the unintended consequence of reducing in-school learning and can be an added strain on parents, schools, and local health departments. While vaccination and mask usage are critical components to ensuring a safe school environment, we will also offer an in-school alternative to quarantining students and school staff at home who have been exposed to COVID-19 in a school environment to support in-school learning and reduce the strain.

Since the beginning of the 2021-22 school year, hundreds of Defiance County students have been quarantined due to exposure in the classroom. Being out of the classroom significantly impacts students' mental health, educators' ability to teach, and caretakers' financial stability. To keep students safe, schools open, and the communities united, school district and health department officials aim to improve the strategy for living life with COVID-19. The Ohio Department of Health, Defiance County School districts and the Defiance County Health Department are in agreement that this change in quarantine procedures allow flexibility for students, staff, and families to make life with COVID more manageable, while still protecting others.

Please note: Eligibility to participate in mask to stay/test to play is contingent on the exposure being in the school setting or school-related activities. This does not apply to household exposures or exposures outside of the school setting or school-related activities.

Families will now have the following options:

1. **School Attendance -- "Mask to Stay"**: For students who are identified as **school contacts** to a COVID-19 positive individual, families must adhere to all of the following conditions in order to remain in school:
    a. A student may attend school during his/her quarantine (14-day quarantine as long as he/she has remained asymptomatic) if he/she properly wears a mask.
    b. Close contacts should vigilantly monitor for symptoms daily.
    c. A student should isolate and get tested if he/she starts to experience symptoms associated with COVID-19 (regardless of symptom severity).
    d. A student may test for COVID-19 on days 5-7, and if the student receives a negative test result, he/she can be released from quarantine after day 7.

2. **Extracurricular Activities -- "Test to Play"**: For students who are identified as **school contacts** to a COVID-19 positive individual, families must adhere to all of the following conditions in order to participate in extracurricular activities:
    a. The student must have a negative test result on day one (1) after verification of exposure. In addition, he/she is required to wear a mask when not actively participating in the event.
    b. A student must be tested for COVID-19 on days 5-7. If the result is negative, the student may be released from quarantine after day 7.

If the student identified as a close contact has been vaccinated, or wore a mask during his/her contact with the positive student, the student identified as a contact will not have to quarantine or miss extracurricular activities, but is recommended to wear a mask and monitor for symptoms.

Additional Guidelines:

- Regardless of quarantine status, any student who tests positive for COVID-19 or is showing symptoms will be required to stay home.
- Quarantined students should stay home when not attending school and should wear a mask in all indoor settings.

COVID-19 is still circulating in Defiance County, and steps to slow the spread of the illness remain important. School and health department officials continue to urge community members to consider getting vaccinated, wear a mask in indoor settings with people outside of their home, wash their hands frequently, stay home when they're ill, and keep sick children home from school as well.

Full details of this quarantine protocol can be found on the health department and county schools' websites and/or social media outlets.

A collaborative effort to prioritize a safe learning environment for students and staff, while also keeping students in school as much as possible, is vital in order for families to move forward. This new quarantine protocol helps schools accomplish that collective goal.

Note: This plan is subject to change.

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