

Overview of new guidance from the NYS Department of Health issued 1/4/22

The most recent “interim” guidance builds on and changes the guidance issued on December 24th and the CDC updated recommendations of December 27th. Ultimately the 1/4/22 guidance from the NYS Department of Health adopts the recommendations of the CDC in reducing quarantine and isolation periods for related COVID exposures and those positively infected.

We have been patiently awaiting some answers to some critical questions but feel it is now necessary to get information out to our school community since the media has already covered many of the changes without full knowledge of the situation. Please know that these rapid changes are confusing and we have been given very little time to actually adjust to this most recent guidance that ultimately changes many of the rules we have been living with. These times remain difficult at best. As always, please reach out with any questions you have and we will do our best to address the questions or attempt to get the answers for you.

Following the CDC recommendations for isolation and quarantine the following are effective as of 1/10/22:

- For those testing **positive** for COVID-19
 - Isolate for 5 days, where day 0 is the day of symptom onset or (if asymptomatic) the day of collection of the positive specimen
 - If asymptomatic at the end of 5 days (or if symptoms are resolving), isolation ends and the individual should wear a **well-fitting mask** while around others for an additional 5 days
 - *We ask that individuals end isolation for a return to school when asymptomatic since “resolving” is very subjective and with current infection rates we want to only be bringing back healthy individuals*
 - Individuals who are moderately-severely immunocompromised should continue to follow the 10-day isolation protocols that have most recently been in place
 - Individuals who are unable to wear a well-fitting mask for 5 days after a 5-day isolation should continue to follow the 10-day isolation protocols that have most recently been in place
- For those who have been **exposed** (considered a close contact) of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 (fully vaccinated now means you received the booster two weeks prior to the exposure if you are eligible to receive the booster; if not eligible to receive the booster you received the final dose of the regular vaccination two weeks prior to the exposure)
 - If not fully vaccinated but eligible for a booster and not yet boosted, quarantine for 5 days and wear a well-fitting mask while around others for another 5 days
 - Individuals will be excluded from school for this period of time but will no longer be contacted by the county DOH to notify you of the quarantine period as this now lies with the school to “exclude” individuals from the school setting

- If fully vaccinated (including the booster) or not yet eligible for a booster, no quarantine is required if the booster or last dose of the regular vaccine was administered at least two weeks prior to the first date of exposure; exposed individuals should wear a well-fitting mask while around others for 10 days after the last date of exposure
- If possible, test at day 5 with either a PCR or rapid test
- If symptoms appear, quarantine and seek testing. If the test is negative the quarantine period would end. If not tested, isolate as a positive individual as stated above

We know the above guidance is somewhat confusing especially when it comes to the changes with the fully vaccinated definition now including the booster shot if eligible. Ask questions if you aren't sure so we can all do our best to limit the chances of transmission and keep our population safe and healthy.

In the case of employees who are required to have weekly COVID testing done if not fully vaccinated we don't have a final answer regarding how this change in definition impacts those that are no longer considered to be fully vaccinated (lacking booster if eligible). We are hoping for definitive clarification soon but in the meantime know that it is expected that testing will be required of those who do not meet the new definition in the near future.