

COVID-19 Guidance for the 2021-2022 School Year



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INTRODUCTION

Prior to the 2020-21 School Year, NOLA Public Schools issued a Roadmap to Reopening Schools, establishing clear operational expectations to guide the reopening of schools in response to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Adherence to these guidelines, in combination with utilization of resources such as testing, resulted in our district providing safe, in-person instruction for nearly the entire school year.

In June 2021 as this guidance was being drafted, the rates of COVID-19 in our community had significantly decreased, however in July 2021 our community began to experience a resurgence in COVID-19 due to the delta variant. Please note that necessary updates to our guidance will be reflected in **RED** along with the effective date throughout this document. The enclosed guidelines provide updated, health and safety standards for schools to adhere to as we continue to serve students and staff in the upcoming school year.

Our health and safety standards for 2021-22 are aligned with guidelines provided by state and federal leaders and the medical experts who have supported us for the past year. These guidelines are developed based on the current context of the pandemic and are likely to change over the course of the year as we observe the course of the pandemic locally and continue to learn from the science of vaccinations, viral transmission, and effective public health practices.

We applaud our educators for building adaptive plans for teaching and learning as they respond to our community's updated safety procedures and protocols. It is also important to acknowledge that there will continue to be cases of COVID-19 in our community, and schools, and we will have the protocols necessary to help our educators determine the appropriate next steps to keep our school community safe. We can continue to get through this together.

For information regarding COVID 19, please visit the [Louisiana Department of Health website](#) and the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website](#) and follow the standards outlined in this document.

ESSENTIAL ENTITIES IN GUIDELINE CREATION

Louisiana State Department of Health:

- Sets the public health requirements for public entities
- Provides the Louisiana Department of Education with guidance on school opening

Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE):

- Provides [guidelines](#) to school districts, aligned to federal and state public health standards, for how to open schools
- Provides best practices and resources for implementing guidelines

City of New Orleans and the New Orleans Health Department:

- Sets [guidelines](#) for citywide reopening
- Communicates status of reopening that directly impact school planning and operations
- Manages community testing and citywide public health surveillance

NOLA Public Schools (NOLA-PS):

- Sets operational health and safety standards for the opening of schools, aligned to health and safety guidelines set by the Louisiana Department of Education and other relevant state and local agencies
- Implements systems to oversee and hold schools accountable to the health and safety standards
- Identifies system-wide needs and seeks solutions to support schools as they continue to serve students and support educators citywide.
- Provides training and resources to schools for successfully implementing the safety standards
- Manages the relationship with the Regional Medical Director and Office of Homeland Security
- Determines if and when schools need to close their facilities, in coordination with school leaders, the New Orleans Health Department, our Medical Advisors, and the Regional Medical Director
- Provides Medical Advisors to schools throughout the school year

Individual Charter Management Organizations:

- Develop school-based operational plans for opening schools in accordance with the NOLA Public Schools Operational Health and Safety Standards
- Implement the day-to-day operational procedures and delivery of instruction to students
- Communicate the status of opening requirements directly to students, families, and staff in the day-to-day implementation of operational and instructional plans
- Communicate with students, families, and staff in the event of illness

TEMPORARY OPERATIONAL RESTRICTIONS

As NOLA Public Schools continues to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic additional restrictions or changes to our guidance may be needed. In this section of the School Year 2021-2022 COVID-19 Guidance, we will provide information on any currently applicable temporary operations restrictions including: the timeline of the restriction, its impact on schools and where this change is reflected in this guidance document. All updates are marked with **red** throughout this guidance.

COVID-19 VACCINES REQUIRED FOR ALL STUDENTS AGED 5 YEARS OR OLDER:

The COVID-19 vaccine will be added to the list of required immunizations for all students aged 5 years and up as of February 1, 2022. Families may claim an exemption to this requirement for philosophical, religious, or medical needs. Families may use [this form](#) to claim an exemption and submit to their students school.

INDOOR MASKING RECOMMENDATION:

Due to recent updates on making recommendations from the CDC, NOLA-PS is providing a timeline to remove the recommendation to wear face masks in school. Regardless of the timeline provided anyone who would like to continue to wear a mask in schools is encouraged to do so.

- Timeline: Wearing a high quality face mask while indoors should remain in place until March 18, 2022. If by that date the level of COVID-19 community spread for Orleans Parish remains low to medium the Indoor Masking recommendation will be lifted as of March 21, 2022. As of March 21, 2022 anyone who would like to continue to wear a mask in schools is encouraged to do so.
 - If at any point the level of community spread of COVID-19 is raised to “High”, as defined by the CDC, additional mitigation precautions may be put into place like a renewed recommendation for indoor masking.

CLEANING IN SCHOOLS:

The CDC has reduced the frequency of cleaning high touch surfaces from twice a day to once a day and our guidance is being updated in response.

- Timeline: The guidance is effective March 7, 2022 and will stay in effect until further notice.

REVISED QUARANTINE GUIDANCE:

In response to recent quarantine guidance updates from the Louisiana Department of Health and CDC, NOLA Public Schools has updated its quarantine guidance to allow for a “Test to Stay” option for unvaccinated or unboosted individuals that are defined as close contacts. All previous quarantine guidance remains in effect.

- Timeline: The guidance is effective March 7, 2022 and will stay in effect until further notice.
- Impact: Additional flexibilities have been added to the quarantine protocols for unvaccinated and unboosted close contacts due to the distribution of thousands of rapid antigen tests to schools.
- Schools may implement a test to stay strategy for students and staff who are not fully or recently vaccinated so they may remain in school. In this option, students and staff do not need to quarantine at home if:
 - They remain asymptomatic AND
 - They mask through Day 10 following their last point of close contact with a positive case AND
 - They test negative for COVID-19 twice during Days 0 - 5 following their last close contact. Tests should be administered on non-consecutive days (e.g., specimen collection on Day 2 and Day 4). If an individual tests positive, see isolation guidance.

REVISED SELF-ISOLATION GUIDANCE:

In response to recent guidance updates from the Louisiana Department of Health, NOLA Public Schools has updated its guidance as described below.

- Timeline: The guidance is effective March 7, 2022 and will stay in effect until further notice.
- Impact: The recommended isolation timeline and guidance's has been updated to:
 - Those who are a confirmed or suspected positive case, are to self-isolate at home for 5 days from the time symptoms began or the time of the first positive test, whichever is earlier. They may return to school on day 6 if symptoms have resolved. Testing after the isolation period and before returning to school is recommended.
 - Positive cases that self-isolate for 5 days are required to wear a high-quality face mask once returning to school on days 6-10.

OPERATIONAL RESTRICTIONS

The following restrictions and requirements will be in place for the 2021-22 school year based on the [School Opening Guidelines](#) provided by the Louisiana Department of Education.

Maximum Classroom Capacity	No maximum classroom size. The maximum group size that may convene indoors in a single room should be determined by physical distancing requirements and student grouping method.
Maximum School Bus Capacity	100% capacity with all passengers wearing a face covering and sitting in assigned seats or with daily seating charts.
Student Classroom Grouping Options	Students may be grouped in classrooms in one of two ways: (1) In static groups with minimal social distancing requirements OR (2) In groups with changing composition, maintain 3-6 feet of social distance from other students and adults.
Reporting Requirements	All NOLA-PS schools are required to report all known and suspected cases of COVID-19 to NOLA PS and the LDH School Portal. A process for providing information on the vaccination rate of students and staff will be established by the beginning of the school year.

OPERATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY STANDARDS FOR SCHOOLS

In consultation with the City of New Orleans Department of Health and the [guidance](#) provided by the Louisiana Department of Education, NOLA Public Schools designed the following operational standards for critical school functions.

The Operational Health and Safety Standards set forth school-site expectations to mitigate the risks associated with COVID-19 for in-person school programs. These standards are subject to change as conditions change.



Conducting Group Gatherings: According to the CDC, a [gathering](#) refers to a planned or spontaneous event, indoors or outdoors, with a small number of people participating or a large number of people in attendance such as a community event or gathering or sporting event.

Maximum Classroom Capacity	There is no maximum number of students designated to each classroom. Group size shall be determined by space available for social distancing requirements and the student grouping used.
Indoor Assembly Spaces	Social Distancing needs should define the capacity and use of Indoor Assembly Spaces.
Outdoor Standards	Social distancing standards are determined by student grouping methods (static OR changing composition).



Transporting Students: These standards are derived from school operating procedures and the best “reasonable standard” given feasibility constraints.

Max. Bus Capacity	100% capacity
Cleaning	High touch surfaces (handrails, handles, seat backs, etc.) should be cleaned once a day.
Seating	Seating charts should be created and enforced in the event close contacts to a positive case of COVID-19 needs to be determined.
Face Coverings	Adults and students are recommended to wear face coverings at all times while riding on school buses through March 18, 2022. Anyone who would like to continue to wear a mask after this timeline is encouraged to do so.
Personal Hygiene	Provide face masks for students that request one.
Ventilation	To increase airflow, windows should be open to the maximum extent possible.



Entering and Exiting School Buildings: Schools will implement the following standards to keep students and staff safe while entering and exiting school buildings.

Entry and Exit Points	Maintain social distance recommendations to the maximum extent possible at all entry and exit points.
Drop-off and Pick-up Processes	Schools should encourage families and employees to self-monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 prior to arrival on campus.
Visitors	Limit nonessential visitors, volunteers, and activities involving external groups or organizations as much as possible. See the LDOE’s Ready to Achieve guidance for a definition of essential visitors.



Practicing Prevention: In accordance with the CDC’s strategies to encourage behaviors that reduce the spread of COVID-19, and with input from medical professionals, schools will implement the following standards.

Daily Cleaning Efforts	High touch surfaces should undergo cleaning with a commercially available cleaning solution, including EPA-approved disinfectants or a dilute bleach solution, at least once per day , including bathrooms See the LDOE’s Reach to Achieve guidance for a list of high touch surfaces and see the CDC’s updated guidance on cleaning in schools here .
Personal Hygiene	Students should wash or sanitize hands upon arrival at school, before and after eating, before and after using outdoor play equipment, and before exiting the school facility.
Personal Protective Supplies	School employees should be provided adequate access to hygienic supplies, including soap, hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol, disinfectant wipes or spray, paper towels, and tissues. Face coverings should also be provided when needed.
Signs and Messaging	Post signs in highly visible locations (e.g., school entrances, restrooms) that promote everyday protective measures and describe how to stop the spread of germs (such as by properly washing hands).
Face Coverings	Wearing a high-quality face mask while indoors should remain in place until March 18, 2022. If by that date the level of COVID-19 community spread for Orleans Parish remains low to medium the Indoor Masking recommendation will be lifted as of March 21, 2022. As of March 21, 2022, anyone who would like to continue to wear a mask in schools is encouraged to do so.
Symptom Monitoring	Schools need to communicate to parents the importance of keeping children home when they are sick and the symptoms they should check for daily. Please refer to the section “When a Child, Staff Member, or Visitor Becomes Sick” for how to respond to someone experiencing COVID-19 symptoms.
Water Fountains	Encourage staff and students to bring their own water to minimize use and touching of water fountains or consider closing shared water fountains.



Student Transitions and Pull Out: To limit contact as students move around the school facility and to support schools in maintaining static groups, schools will implement the following standards.

Provider Pull Out	Students with disabilities should receive special education and related services in the least restrictive environment. Schools should consider any additional service providers who need to enter the classroom, students who receive services outside the classroom (e.g. resource, APE), and/or students who receive services through alternate instructional methods.
Controlling Flow	Limit the interactions of students during class transitions via one-way flow hallways, clearly defined space for two-way direction of student flow in hallways or staggered class changes to decrease the number of students in the hallway at one time.



Child Nutrition: Our schools will maintain a healthy environment and provide healthy school meals to our students.

Available Meal Programs	Meals are provided to all students. If students are being accommodated with distance learning, a meal service option must be created to provide two meals a day.
Eating at School	Cafeterias may be used to support student dining, but social distancing should be practiced with non-static groups.



Extracurricular Activities: Schools will offer extended school day options and non-academic experiences for students while complying with health and safety guidance, schools will implement the following extracurricular standards.

Aftercare	Must maintain static groups where possible and/or implement social distancing requirements for groups of changing composition and enforce facial covering protocols.
Band and Vocal Music	Band and Choir may occur indoors if members are either fully vaccinated or participating in weekly testing.
Field Trips	Field trips can occur but must adhere to similar operational guidance's while off campus.
Athletics	Athletic activities are to comply with the recommendations put forth in the Louisiana High School Athletic Association's Guidance for Opening Up High School Athletics and Activities . Students participating in athletics must be vaccinated or participating in a weekly testing regiment.

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

Older adults and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions might be at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19. To review a list of the populations at higher risk for severe illness, please visit the [CDC website](#).

For students requiring distance learning due to health conditions, families must gain documentation from a physician and provide it to their schools for review and approval. The educational programming provided will be determined by each school if and when accommodations are approved. Schools may provide families with the following [form](#) to request special accommodations.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Known and Suspected Cases of COVID-19

Once schools are notified of a confirmed case or identify a suspected case in their school community (student or staff member) either through public health contact tracing, family notification or school provided routine testing, the school is to report this incident in the following ways. Please note, schools are asked to report single cases and multiple cases differently.

- **Single Confirmed or Suspected Case:**
 - School nurses should call the Children’s Hospital New Orleans Hotline for School Wellness and Virtual Care COVID-19 hotline (504.837.7760) to determine any additional steps related to communication, quarantining practices, internal-to-school contact tracing, or enhanced cleaning or disinfection processes.
 - School staff should communicate the case to NOLA Public Schools via our online form found [here](#) immediately. Information should **not** include name, date of birth or other identifiable data.
 - School staff should submit information regarding the case to LDH via School Online COVID-19 portal. If there are issues logging into your online portal you may contact the Region 1 Office of the Louisiana Department of Health and make the report to epidemiology team member Ashlyn Pinkins at 504-568-8310, Ashlyn.Pinkins@la.gov or Lauren Kleamenakis at Lauren.Kleamenakis@la.gov.
 - Additional resources and tools:
 - Schools may view a checklist of all needed actions once a confirmed or suspect case is identified [here \(updated 3.4.2022\)](#).
 - Please see additional guidance [here](#) for considerations for students with disabilities excluded during quarantine.
- **Multiple Confirmed Cases:** If multiple cases of COVID-19 are reported at a single site during a 10-day period, schools must contact the Region 1 Office of the Louisiana Department of Health and the NOLA Public Schools Medical Advisors to review and determine when/if additional actions are required.
 - Louisiana Department of Health Region 1 contact information: Ashlyn Pinkins at 504-568-8310 or Ashlyn.Pinkins@la.gov or Lauren Kleamenakis at Lauren.Kleamenakis@la.gov. LDH may assist with contact tracing or recommend additional mitigation efforts.
 - NOLA Public Schools Medical Advisors Contact Information: Medical_Advisors@nolapublicschools.com

Vaccination Status of Students and Staff

Schools must track the vaccination status of students and staff. Schools may verify vaccination status in one of the following ways.

- Louisiana Immunization Network School Nurse Portal: This portal will allow school nurses to verify the COVID-19 vaccination status for students. This is the preferred method to verify student immunization status for COVID-19.
- LA Wallet: Staff with LA Wallet on their mobile devices will be able to demonstrate their COVID-19 vaccination status via their electronic ID.
- Health Care Provider Vaccination Card: Schools may use vaccination cards provided by the individual's vaccinator as evidence of COVID-19 vaccination. For students providing Health Care Provider Vaccination cards their status should be verified via the Louisiana Immunization Network School Nurse Portal.

It is critical for schools to know the vaccination status of all staff and students to aid in contact tracing protocols. Schools will be asked to update NOLA Public Schools with the rate of vaccination among students and staff with a yet to be determined frequency.

COVID-19 TESTING AND VACCINATION RESOURCES

In addition to the operations and safety guidance provided in other sections of this guidance document the availability of testing for symptomatic individuals, routine testing and access to vaccinations are vital components to our ongoing strategy to keep students and staff safe while in school. Below is an overview of the resources available to students and staff for this upcoming school year.

Symptomatic Testing

All students, teachers, and staff experiencing [symptoms](#) of COVID-19 are strongly encouraged to stay home from school and seek treatment by medical professionals. Symptomatic students may continue to visit Children's Hospital for free COVID-19 testing by calling the Children's Hospital New Orleans Hotline for School Wellness and Virtual Care COVID-19 hotline (504.837.7760) to make a testing appointment. Symptomatic teachers and staff may continue to access free COVID-19 testing via a partnership with Ochsner Health System. The City of New Orleans maintains a database of organizations offering COVID-19 testing which can be found [here](#).

Routine Testing

All students, teachers, and staff – and particularly those who may be unvaccinated - are strongly encouraged to participate in routine, weekly molecular testing, for the virus that causes COVID-19. Schools should prioritize testing participation among participants in interscholastic sports, band, chorus, and other extracurricular activities that may either involve removal of masks or engaging with individuals outside of the immediate school community. Routine testing is available at any public-school campus by request. Details regarding the mobile testing program, to be executed in partnership with the Louisiana Department of Health and local health partners, are available from testing coordinator Morgan Ripski – mripski@nolapublicschools.com.

Vaccination

Vaccines against the virus that causes COVID-19 are the most effective tool to decrease rates of disease, hospitalization, and death among vaccine-eligible populations.

COVID-19 vaccinations (completion of two dose series) will be required for all students aged 5 years of age or older by February 1, 2022. Mobile vaccination services may be available at any public-school campus by request. In addition, the city has a list of vaccination locations anyone can access [here](#).

Families may use [this form](#) to claim an exemption and submit to their students school.

For additional information on the benefits of vaccination, please click [here](#).

For more information on public health measures to protect against COVID-19 after vaccination, please click [here](#).

PREPARATION AND ACTIONS FOR CONFIRMED OR SUSPECTED CASES OF COVID-19

Upon review of best practices included in the [LDOE Reopening Guidelines](#) and in consultation with public health experts, the following guidelines should be used when a child, staff member or visitor is a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19.

Before the start of school all schools should:

- Establish an area that can be used to isolate [sick](#) students, staff, or visitors. This should be an area that is distinct from the area used for first aid or medication dispensing if possible, so those activities can continue unaffected.
- Develop a [cleaning and disinfection process](#) for if someone is sick at school.
- Communicate with parents and staff about [what to do when you are sick](#).
- Actively encourage staff and students who are sick or who have had [close contact](#) with a person with COVID-19 to stay home.
- Provide parents a [checklist](#) to document that children have no symptoms every morning and no other family members are ill at home.
- Share information with staff, students, and families on the proper use, wearing, removal, and cleaning of cloth face coverings. CDC offers information to assist with selection of appropriate masks [here](#).
 - It is important to note that children should not wear face coverings when asleep or unconscious (such as during nap time in lower grade levels).
- Develop systems for notifying staff, families, and the public as needed if a person with COVID-19 was on the school premises while infectious. Do this in coordination with local health officials while maintaining confidentiality in accordance with FERPA and all other state and federal laws.

When a Child, Staff Member, or Visitor Becomes Sick at School:

- Implement isolation measures and act swiftly to ensure the sick person leaves campus quickly and safely.
 - School health staff (school nurses) should wear appropriate PPE including mask, gloves, and eye protection while caring for the sick individual.
 - Consider transportation needs to ensure students with limited means to personal transportation can be returned home safely.
 - Individuals who display symptoms of COVID-19 should obtain a molecular COVID-19 test.
- Follow with a cleaning and disinfecting process. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) offers a [framework](#) for cleaning and disinfectant practices.
- Once schools are notified of a **confirmed case** or a **suspected case** (an individual shows symptoms of COVID-19 who does not have a negative molecular test result for COVID-19 or documentation from a physician of an alternative diagnosis) that has not been cleared in 48 hours in their school community (student or staff member), the school is to report this incident in accordance with the required reporting protocols of this guidance.
- **Those who are a confirmed or suspected positive case, are to self-isolate at home for 5 days from the time symptoms began or the time of the first positive test, whichever is earlier. They may return to school on day 6 if symptoms have resolved. Testing after the isolation period and before returning to school is recommended.**
 - **Positive cases that self-isolate for 5 days are required to wear a high-quality face mask once returning to school on days 6-10.**

- Those identified as close contacts are recommended to quarantine using the following guidance's:
 - Students who have completed the full two dose regimen of an mRNA vaccine:
 - If asymptomatic, no quarantine is required.
 - Wear a mask around others for 10 days.
 - Test on day 5 (molecular or antigen)
 - Staff who are recently fully vaccinated or received a booster (two dose regimen of Pfizer or Moderna vaccine within the last 6 months, OR have completed the primary series of J&J vaccine within the last 2 months, OR have been boosted)
 - If asymptomatic, no quarantine is required.
 - Wear a mask around others for 10 days.
 - Test on day 5 (molecular or antigen)
 - Students who are unvaccinated or not fully vaccinated:
 - Stay home for 5 days.
 - After that continue to wear a mask around others for 5 additional days.
 - Test on day 5 (molecular or antigen)
 - Staff who are unvaccinated or not recently vaccinated (completed a two-dose regimen of Pfizer or Moderna vaccine over 6 months ago and are not boosted, OR completed the primary series of J&J over 2 months ago and are not boosted):
 - Stay home for 5 days.
 - After that continue to wear a mask around others for 5 additional days.
 - Test on day 5 (molecular or antigen)
- **Test to Stay: Schools may implement a test to stay strategy for students and staff who are not fully or recently vaccinated so they may remain in school. In this option, students and staff do not need to quarantine at home if:**
 - **They remain asymptomatic AND**
 - **They mask through Day 10 following their last point of close contact with a positive case AND**
 - **They test negative for COVID-19 twice during Days 0 - 5 following their last close contact. Tests should be administered on non-consecutive days (e.g., specimen collection on Day 2 and Day 4). If an individual tests positive, see isolation guidance.**
- Close Contact Definition: The Louisiana Department of Health has included additional flexibilities in the close contact tracing process. Generally, a close contact is someone who was less than 6 feet away from infected person (laboratory-confirmed or a clinical diagnosis) for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period. **However, additional guidance's and flexibilities from the LDH can be found [here](#).**
 - For additional close contact tracing support the School Nurse may call the Children's Hospital New Orleans Hotline for School Wellness and Virtual Care COVID-19 hotline (504.837.7760) to determine any additional steps related to communication, quarantining practices, internal-to-school contact tracing, or enhanced cleaning or disinfection processes. Schools may also contact LDH's epidemiology team for additional contact tracing or mitigation recommendations by emailing Ashlyn Pinkins at Ashlyn.Pinkins@la.gov.
 - Schools should use [screening decision trees \(updated 1.18.22\)](#) produced by New Orleans Children's Hospital for unvaccinated students, teachers, or staff who are identified as close contacts of a confirmed case OR for anyone (vaccinated or unvaccinated) who may show symptoms of COVID-19.
- If a teacher or student within a "static group" is a confirmed case, the unvaccinated, non-recently vaccinated or non-boosted members of the "static group" are to self-quarantine when detailed information such as seating charts or other information is not available for contact tracing.

- If a teacher or student is a confirmed case or symptomatic person with a known exposure in a school that is *not using “static groups,”* all unvaccinated, non-recently vaccinated or non-boosted teachers, school staff and students that maintained less than 6 feet of social distancing for 15 minutes or more are to self-quarantine. Classroom seating charts are important tools that schools can use to accurately identify who may qualify as a close contact in such circumstances.

School Communication Requirements:

Once a confirmed case or a symptomatic person with known exposure is identified, schools are responsible for communicating to students, families, and staff if they were in close contact with that person, and to provide general information to their school community. Schools should follow the steps below outlining required communication when a confirmed case is identified:

- Schools should enter the case into the LDH online reporting system.
- Schools should rely on the Louisiana Department of Health Region 1 Office if additional help is needed to identify close contacts by contacting Ashlyn Pinkins at Ashlyn.pinkins@la.gov or 504-568-8310 or Lauren Kleamenakis at Lauren.Kleamenakis@la.gov.
- Schools are required to communicate to students and staff members that were identified as “close contacts” to the confirmed case or symptomatic person with known exposure, and schools must require the close contacts to self-quarantine.
 - The Louisiana Department of Health has created a communication template for those identified as close contacts, this template will need to be altered for communications to staff members. The communication template can be found [here](#).
- Schools are required to provide a general message to their school community once a known case is identified with general information only (not personal identifiers).
- NOLA Public Schools will track information from all schools regarding the number of confirmed cases. This information will be made public weekly on our website to ensure transparency. The NOLA PS COVID-19 Tracker can be found [here](#).

When a Child or Staff Member Becomes Sick at Home:

- Parents should continue to monitor children for [symptoms](#) every morning and ensure no other family members at home are ill before sending children to school.
- If a child shows COVID-like symptoms, parents should call the Children’s Hospital New Orleans Hotline for School Wellness and Virtual Care COVID-19 hotline (504.837.7760) to determine if any additional steps related to testing, or quarantining practices are needed. If needed, Children’s Hospital staff and the State of Louisiana Department of Health contact tracers will conduct contact tracing activities, including school-based contacts, for confirmed cases.
- If your child is a confirmed case, contact your child’s school to notify them of the child’s health status. Your child will need to stay home for 5 days and be without symptoms for at least 24 hours before returning to school and it is recommended they receive a negative test before returning.
- All **unvaccinated** students and **unboosted** staff identified as a close contact (within six feet for 15 minutes or more in a 24-hour period) with a confirmed case or a symptomatic person with a known exposure will need to quarantine as defined by this guidance. These situations should also be referred to Children’s Hospital New Orleans Hotline for School Wellness and Virtual Care COVID-19 hotline (504.837.7760) to determine additional steps. Further guidance from the CDC about measures to take following exposure can be found [here](#).
 - If schools do not have detailed information such as seating charts or other information needed for contact tracing, or if students may have interacted closely throughout the course of the school day in a way that cannot be closely tracked, then the entire classroom should be identified as close contacts.

Returning to School after Illness:

Students and staff who have been sick with COVID-like symptoms can return to school once conditions as identified in the Return to School Self-Certification for COVID-19 form are met. The form can be found [here](#) and should be presented to the school before the student or staff member returns to school or work.

Questions about return to school practices should be referred to the Children’s Hospital New Orleans Hotline for School Wellness and Virtual Care COVID-19 hotline (504.837.7760). Notably, people with conditions that weaken their immune system might need to stay home longer than described above, and those individuals should consult with their healthcare provider for more information.

School Closure Decisions:

School District administrators, appropriate public health officials (e.g., the State of Louisiana Regional Medical Director), and contracted public health experts will consult with schools prior to finalizing a decision to close an individual school as a safety measure. If a school has more than one positive case at a single school site, they must report the information regarding those cases to NOLA PS Medical Advisor and the Region 1 Office of the Louisiana Department of Health.

In the event of a school closure, it is critically important that schools be able to pivot from in-person to distance learning so that disruption can be minimized while students and staff need to be away from a school building for extended periods of time. Please see additional guidance [here](#) for considerations for students with disabilities excluded during school closure.