

## **Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19): Guidance for Childcare Facilities, Schools, and Institutions of Higher Education (IHE)**

This document provides guidance for how DC Childcare Facilities, Schools, and IHEs can reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission in their facilities. For additional information, including current District COVID-19-related public health data, please visit [coronavirus.dc.gov](https://coronavirus.dc.gov).

### **Definitions:**

**COVID-19 community levels**- a new tool created by the CDC to help communities and individuals decide what prevention steps to take based on the COVID-19 level in their area. There are 3 levels: **Low, Medium, and High**. To look up current COVID-19 community levels for DC and other areas of the U.S., see [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/covid-by-county.html](https://cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/covid-by-county.html).

**Educational facilities:** In this guidance, this term is used to refer to all settings covered by this guidance (childcare facilities, schools, and IHE).

**Schools:** In this guidance, this term refers to Pre-Kindergarten (within DCPS, public charter, and private, parochial, and independent school facilities) through 12<sup>th</sup> grade, and Adult Education

**Students:** In this guidance, this term is used to refer to students at a school or IHE, as well as children at a childcare facility.

### **Prevention of COVID-19**

Some COVID-19 prevention recommendations vary based upon COVID-19 community level (see above)

## **RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDLESS OF COMMUNITY TRANSMISSION LEVELS:**

### **1) COVID-19 vaccination**

- Vaccination is the most important public health intervention for ending the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The COVID-19 vaccine is highly effective at preventing severe illness, hospitalization, and death.
- Everyone 5 and older is currently eligible to be vaccinated.
- Get vaccinated and stay up to date on your COVID-19 vaccine.
- Find out more about:
  - General guidance on staying up to date on the COVID-19 vaccine: [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/stay-up-to-date.html](https://cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/stay-up-to-date.html)
  - Guidance for quarantining in schools: [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-contact-tracing/about-quarantine.html](https://cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-contact-tracing/about-quarantine.html)
  - Booster shots: [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/booster-shot.html](https://cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/booster-shot.html)
  - Getting the COVID-19 vaccine in DC: [coronavirus.dc.gov/vaccine](https://coronavirus.dc.gov/vaccine)
  - COVID-19 vaccine mandates: see Mayor's Order 2021-109, available at [coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance](https://coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance)

### **2) Stay home when sick**

- The following persons **must not** attend, work at, or visit an educational facility due to the risk of exposing others. Ask families to be alert for signs of illness in children and to keep them home if they are sick.
  - Anyone who is experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 or another infectious illness

- Symptoms of COVID-19 overlap with symptoms of other common viral illnesses such as flu.
- **NOTE: Educational facilities should use their judgment when making decisions on what symptoms require individuals to stay home.**
- Childcare facilities must also continue following the exclusion requirements included in the licensing regulations (DCMR 5A-151).
- Anyone who is required to isolate or quarantine due to COVID-19 diagnosis or exposure
- Anyone who is awaiting a COVID-19 test due to symptoms of COVID-19
  - These persons must not enter an educational facility until their test comes back **negative**.

### 3) **Quarantine (for people exposed to COVID-19)**

- **Quarantine** is the process of separating individuals who have been exposed to an infectious agent (like COVID-19) before they develop symptoms of infection or test positive for infection, for the duration of time that covers the incubation period for the pathogen. Quarantine is a powerful tool for preventing the spread of COVID-19.
- Individuals who are up to date on COVID-19 vaccination or who have had COVID-19 with recovery in the last 90 days are not required to quarantine.
- Any person who is required to quarantine due to COVID-19 exposure **must not** attend, work at, or visit an educational facility due to the risk of exposing others.
- Quarantine length for educational facilities:
  - For people younger than age 2: **10 days**
  - For people age 2 and older: **5 days minimum quarantine period (with a negative antigen test or nucleic acid amplification test (NAAT i.e., PCR) done on Day 5).**
  - **For details about quarantine see: *Guidance for Close Contacts of a Person Confirmed to have COVID-19: Quarantine and Testing* at [coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance](https://coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance).**
- Schools (**not** childcare facilities or IHE) also have the option to follow the CDC Test to Stay protocol for people who are identified as close contacts instead of a conventional quarantine.
  - For more information about Test to Stay see: [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/what-you-should-know.html](https://cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/what-you-should-know.html).

### 4) **Isolation (for symptomatic or COVID-19 positive people)**

- **Isolation** is the process of separating individuals with symptoms of an infection or confirmed diagnosis of an infection (like COVID-19) away from others, to prevent spread of a pathogen. Isolation is a powerful tool for preventing the spread of COVID-19.
- Any person who is required to isolate due to COVID-19 symptoms or diagnosis **must not** attend, work at, or visit an educational facility due to the risk of exposing others. They should isolate at home and consult with their healthcare provider for testing and care as needed.
- A person who is *awaiting* a COVID-19 test due to symptoms of COVID-19 must not attend, work at, or visit an educational facility until their test comes back negative.
- Isolation length for educational facilities:
  - For children younger than age 2 **and** anyone age 2 and older who is unable to consistently wear a mask when around other people: **10 days**
  - For people age 2 and older who are able to consistently wear a mask when around other people): **5 days minimum isolation period (with a negative antigen test done on Day 5.)**
  - **For details about isolation, see *Guidance for Isolation: People who Test Positive for COVID-19* at [coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance](https://coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance).**

**5) Ventilation:**

- Keep indoor spaces well ventilated.
  - For more information, see [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/ventilation.html](https://cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/ventilation.html).

**6) Communication:**

- If a student or staff member develops symptoms of COVID-19 during the school/childcare day, the school/childcare facility should have a process in place that allows them to isolate until they are able to go home. Note: Multiple symptomatic individuals should not isolate in the same space in the facility at the same time.
- If an educational facility identifies a student or staff member with COVID-19 who is in the facility, they should dismiss that person as well as any other potentially exposed individuals who don't meet quarantine exemption criteria. Contact identification should be carried out by facility administration to identify and dismiss potential close contacts.
- Facilities should have a notification process in place to share the following with staff, students, and parents/guardians if a case occurs at the facility:
  - Education about COVID-19, including the signs and symptoms of COVID-19
  - Referral to *Guidance for Close Contacts of a Person Confirmed to have COVID-19: Quarantine and Testing*, available at [coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance](https://coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance).
  - Information on options for COVID-19 testing in the District of Columbia, available at [coronavirus.dc.gov/testing](https://coronavirus.dc.gov/testing).
  - The privacy of the staff or student must be maintained.

**7) Reporting:**

- Educational facilities **must** notify DC Health if
  - They have 5 or more confirmed COVID-19 cases at the facility within a 5 day period AND the persons were in the facility during the 5 days prior to symptom onset or positive test date (if the person is asymptomatic).
- Notify DC Health by submitting an online form on the DC Health COVID-19 Reporting Requirements website: [dchealth.dc.gov/page/covid-19-reporting-requirements](https://dchealth.dc.gov/page/covid-19-reporting-requirements).
  - Submit a Non-Healthcare Facility COVID-19 Consult Form.
  - DC Health must be notified on the same day the **fifth** case was reported to the facility, preferably as soon as possible after the facility was notified.

**RISK-BASED RECOMMENDATIONS**

Recommendations for the following mitigation measures vary depending upon community risk levels.

**1) Masks**

- Most people do not need to wear masks indoors at educational facilities unless COVID-19 community levels are **HIGH**. If COVID-19 community levels are **MEDIUM**, people who are immunocompromised or at higher risk for severe COVID-19 should wear a mask or respirator indoors at educational facilities.
- Masks are not necessary outdoors.
- **NOTE:** Universal masking (regardless of vaccination status) is required in healthcare facilities within educational settings (e.g., health suites, student health centers).
- Staff providing medical care to students, or assisting or supervising students with symptoms of possible COVID-19 must follow guidance for *Required Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for Healthcare Facilities* at [coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance](https://coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance).
- Mask mandates can be introduced by facilities as needed.
- **At any COVID-19 community level (even LOW), a person may choose to wear a mask**

**based on personal or parent/guardian preference and assessment of their personal risk.**

- Anyone who develops symptoms of COVID-19 while at an educational facility must put on a mask or respirator, leave the facility, and begin isolation.
- For detailed mask and respirator recommendations, see *Community COVID-19 Guidance* at [coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance](https://coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance).

## **2) Physical distancing**

- Physical distancing means maintaining 6 feet distance or more between yourself and other people.
- If you are up to date on your COVID-19 vaccine, you do not need to practice routine physical distancing unless COVID-19 community levels are **HIGH**.
- The following groups of people are recommended to continue physical distancing from others in indoor public spaces as much as possible:
  - People who are unvaccinated (including children younger than 5), partially vaccinated, or not up to date on their COVID-19 vaccine
  - Immunocompromised people
  - People who are at high risk for severe COVID-19
- Maintain physical distance from sick people whenever possible.

## **3) Screening testing**

- Screening testing is not necessary when COVID-19 community levels are **LOW**.
- Consider screening testing in educational facilities when COVID-19 community levels are **MEDIUM** or **HIGH**.
- For information about screening testing, see *Overview of Testing for SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19)* at [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/testing-overview.html#print](https://cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/testing-overview.html#print).

The guidelines above will continue to be updated as the District's pandemic response evolves. Please visit [coronavirus.dc.gov](https://coronavirus.dc.gov) regularly for the most current information.