



This guidance is in accordance with current health orders from the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and Contra Costa Health Services (CCHS). It is important to note that there will undoubtedly be continued community spread of COVID-19 well into the fall. The goal is to have practical recommendations in place to minimize risk while still allowing for in-class learning to resume.

Districts should seek guidance from CCHS to address unique circumstances. Responses will be modified by CCHS and CCCOE based on new guidance or directives from state agencies. The Contra Costa County Office of Education will continue to work closely with Contra Costa Health Services regarding the timing for reopening schools.

[The California Department of Education also recently released its document “Stronger Together: A Guidebook for the Safe Reopening of California’s Public Schools.”](#) This document also contains valuable information, resources and recommendations regarding the safe reopening of schools and addresses many of the questions listed below.

Please visit www.cchealth.org/coronavirus for more local health information and guidance regarding COVID-19.

Frequently Asked Questions COVID-19 and Contra Costa County Schools - Updated December 15,2020 -

Screening, Testing, Symptom Checking:

If someone develops symptoms at school that could be COVID-19, what needs to happen?

Students who develop symptoms of illness while at school should be separated from others right away, preferably isolated in an area through which others do not enter or pass. If more than one student is in an isolation area, ensure physical distancing.

Any students or staff exhibiting symptoms should immediately don a face covering and wait in an isolation area until they can be transported home or to a healthcare facility. Isolated students should receive continued supervision and care until picked up by an authorized adult.

There is no need for others who had contact with the sick person to quarantine themselves while waiting for results of the test.

If a student or teacher tests positive, with or without symptoms, will we need to close a class or an entire school?

Not necessarily. Next steps are determined on a case-by-case basis.

CCHS will conduct contact tracing to determine who, if anyone, may have had close contact with the person who tested positive and will provide guidance to the school, including whether a school or class closure is recommended.

Whenever a positive case is confirmed on campus, the school should perform a thorough cleaning of areas where the person spent time, especially high-contact surfaces.

What qualifies as a “close contact” with a person who has COVID-19?

A person is considered to have had close contact if they were within six feet of someone who tested positive for COVID-19 for at least 15 minutes.

During the contact tracing process, CCHS will work with the person who tested positive to determine who, if anyone, had close contact, and will communicate directly with them.

Should schools take attendance for both students AND staff?

Yes, all schools and school facilities should have a process in place for attendance collection of everyone present, every day. This is critical if the need for contact tracing arises.

Will students and adults entering campuses be screened for symptoms?

Temperature screening at school is optional. Schools may implement their own screening measures for students and adults entering campus, however doing so would likely be challenging to implement, especially for larger schools. For symptom screening guidelines, refer to the Centers for Disease & Control’s [Symptoms of Coronavirus page](#).

Is the process for testing children different from adults?

The process for testing children is the same as it is for adults. Community testing is available for both children and adults. Talk to your healthcare provider, or call 1-844-421-0804 to make a fast, convenient appointment at no cost to you at a county testing site.

When should I consider getting a COVID-19 test for myself or my child?

CCHS recommends a COVID-19 test for anyone who believes they may need one, whether or not they have symptoms. People who have symptoms of illness are encouraged to get tested. Visit coronavirus.cchealth.org/get-tested to learn more about testing in Contra Costa County.

Personal Protective Equipment:

Who should wear a face covering?

- All students, staff and visitors over the age of 2 should wear face coverings at all times while on campus (indoors and outdoors) except when eating or drinking, or during outdoor exercise activities.
- When eating or drinking, students and staff should maintain physical distancing to reduce the chance of transmission.
- If face coverings are removed while doing outdoor exercise, people should maintain 9 feet of physical distancing to reduce the chance of transmission.

Will any face covering work?

Generally yes, but not all masks provide the same amount of protection or decrease the spread. Please see the state's [tips on face coverings](#) for more info.

What if an individual cannot wear a face covering?

The state's face covering guidance recognizes that there are some people who cannot wear a face covering for a number of reasons. People are exempted from the requirement if they are under age 2, have a medical or mental health condition or disability that would make it difficult for them to properly wear or handle a mask, or when it would inhibit communication with a person who is hearing impaired.

Persons exempted from wearing a face covering due to a medical condition should wear a non-restrictive alternative, such as a face shield with a drape on the bottom edge, as long as their condition permits it.

Here are some considerations for individuals who must wear a face shield instead of a mask:

Although evidence on face shields is limited, the available data suggest that the following face shields may provide better source control than others:

- Face shields that wrap around the sides of the wearer's face and extend
- below the chin
- Hooded face shields

Face shield wearers should wash their hands before and after removing the face shield and avoid touching their eyes, nose and mouth when removing it.

Disposable face shields should only be worn for a single use and disposed of according to manufacturer instructions.

Reusable face shields should be cleaned and disinfected after each use according to manufacturer instructions or by following CDC face shield cleaning instructions.

What if someone forgets to bring their mask to school?

Schools should develop protocols to provide a face covering to students or staff who forget to bring a face covering to school to prevent unnecessary exclusions. The California Office of Emergency Services has distributed appropriate face coverings for each school throughout the state to local county offices of education.

What if a student refuses to wear a mask at schools?

Face coverings should be considered part of the dress code and required. Once able to wear a face covering, they can return to school.

What is the guidance on face coverings and physical distancing on buses?

We recognize that a full 6 feet of physical distancing may not be practicable on buses, therefore face coverings are essential and must be worn. Physical distancing should be maximized to the extent practicable.

Physical Distancing:

What are the physical distancing protocols (distance, number permitted in a group) in multiple settings: in classroom, hallways, common outdoor spaces?

Where practicable, physical distancing of at least four to six feet should be maintained between students within a classroom or instructional area; at least six feet should be maintained between adults and students.

Depending on grade level, physical space, and class sizes, schools could consider the following strategies, where possible and appropriate:

- Minimize contact at school between students, staff, families and the community at the beginning and end of the school day
- Keep each child's belongings separated and in individually labeled storage containers, cubbies or areas
- Ensure adequate supplies to minimize the sharing of high-touch materials (art supplies, equipment, etc.) to the extent practicable or limit the use of supplies and equipment to one group of children at a time and clean and disinfect between uses
- Avoid sharing electronic devices, clothing, toys, books, and other games or learning aids as much as practicable

What is the recommended number of students in a class based on student age and room size?

The number of students per classroom will depend on room size and furniture configuration. Schools will likely need to assess their physical spaces and determine capacity accordingly.

Do schools need to close or limit access to common outdoor spaces?

Common outdoor spaces may present less risk of transmission than indoor spaces, assuming students and adults maintain physical distancing. Schools may consider staggering recesses and/or outdoor time so that smaller groups are using shared spaces at one time.

When using outdoor spaces, cohorts should be maintained whenever possible. Contact sports and activities that encourage close contact should be avoided.

What are the recommendations on how to configure the campus to include a space to isolate people who become ill at school? Are there possible campus configurations to designate an 'area' or safe place where students can wait to be picked up, if they are showing signs of COVID-19?

When feasible, identify a "sick room" through which others do not regularly pass where symptomatic individuals can remain until they are able to go home.

If more than one student is sick at school, can they isolate in the same area until they are picked up?

Ideally the school nurse or other adult should separate them as much as possible.

Are all adults and adult volunteers (parents) excluded from campus?

Not necessarily. Schools should decide based on what makes sense at the site, observing prevention principles such as maintaining cohort groups, physical distancing and hygiene.

Will students and staff be allowed to bring backpacks and personal items to and from school?

Yes. While items transferred back and forth between environments do have some potential to introduce viruses, there is little evidence that transmission of COVID-19 from fomites (objects or materials) is a significant risk.

To the extent practicable, schools could provide options or solutions like allowing students to keep materials at home or leveraging distance learning resources as much as possible.

School Schedules and Cohort Groups:

Should we consider starting the school year earlier or later than our Board adopted calendar?

It is encouraged that school calendars be informed by engaging with stakeholders and bargaining units. When to start school is a local decision. Starting the school year later is not recommended. It is unlikely that the benefits of starting later will be realized considering COVID-19 will continue to be in our community and some measures for physical distancing will be required. Students have likely experienced learning loss during this time and extending the summer will likely continue to add to this.

What is the recommended number of students in a class based on student age and room size?

The number of students per classroom will depend on room size and furniture configuration. Schools will likely need to assess their physical spaces and determine capacity accordingly.

What is meant by stable cohorts?

Stable cohorts represent a group of students and staff members staying together through the course of a day to eliminate or limit the mixing of students and staff in classes or congregate settings. Stable cohorts restrict the ability of a virus to spread beyond the cohort and allow for quicker more efficient tracing in the event a student or staff member contracts a virus. Consideration should be given to not only how stable cohorts can be maintained in the classroom but also the ability to keep these students together at lunch or during break times.

Are all grade levels not allowed to mix cohorts? What about middle and high school?

To the extent practicable, cohorts should be maintained. This may require out-of-the box thinking like rotating instructors rather than classes, staggering schedules, or shifting rooms around to limit the distances students may have to travel between rooms. Face coverings and other safety measures become more important when cohorts mix. Those measures include wearing face coverings, physical distancing, and rigorous handwashing. Avoid congregate settings.

Should schools stagger arrival and pick up times?

Staggered arrivals can aid in a school's ability to maintain physical distancing. If administering temperature checks this could support the completion of these checks in a timely manner.

Can schools bring students in for testing on a one to one basis?

Yes, students can be brought in for testing and assessments. Please be sure to follow guidance for physical distancing, masking, etc.

Can schools bring students together in small groups/ pods for SAT testing?

Yes, schools can bring students together in small groups/ pods for SAT or similar testing. Please be sure to follow guidance for physical distancing, masking, etc.

Does this guidance allow for singing or playing instruments?

Yes, outdoor singing and band practice are permitted, provided that precautions such as physical distancing and mask wearing are implemented to the maximum extent possible. Playing of wind instruments (any instrument played by the mouth, such as a trumpet or clarinet) is strongly discouraged. School officials, staff, parents, and students should be aware of the increased likelihood for transmission from exhaled droplets during singing and band practice, and physical distancing beyond 6 feet is strongly recommended for any of these activities.

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/Schools-FAQ.aspx>

Transportation:

What safety measures will need to be in place for bus drivers and students?

To lower the risk of exposure, districts may implement the following:

- Staff should be wearing face coverings
- Students should be encouraged to use cloth face coverings and avoid touching their faces
- When possible, space students out on buses
- Windows may be open for better ventilation
- Families will be encouraged to sit together
- Physical distancing when getting on/off the bus will be required

Reopening and Course Offerings:

What sports and extracurricular activities can be offered?

Currently no contact activities are permitted, including sports or other extracurricular activities that involve the potential of person-to-person physical contact. These may be some of the last restrictions to be lifted because of the high-risk nature. Outdoor singing and band practice are permitted, provided that precautions such as physical distancing and mask wearing are implemented to the maximum extent possible. Playing of wind instruments (any instrument played by the mouth, such as a trumpet or clarinet) is strongly discouraged. School officials, staff, parents, and students should be aware of the increased likelihood for transmission from exhaled droplets during singing and band practice, and physical distancing beyond 6 feet is strongly recommended for any of these activities.

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/Schools-FAQ.aspx>

Reporting/Health Protocols/Communication:

What is the protocol for handling students or staff exhibiting symptoms?

Students or staff who are exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms should not come to school. If they begin exhibiting symptoms after arriving at school, separate the individual from others as much as possible and make arrangements for the individual to go home as soon as possible. When feasible, identify a “sick room” through which others do not regularly pass where symptomatic individuals can remain until they are able to go home. Procedures should be established to arrange for safe transport home or to a healthcare facility, as appropriate.

What are the expected reporting procedures with Contra Costa Health Services (CCHS)? What are the procedures for referring, tracing, and isolating students and staff with symptoms or diagnosis?

CCHS has procedures in place for investigating communicable disease cases. CCHS staff will conduct contact tracing using classroom rosters and information obtained from school personnel through interviews and in coordination with school officials.

What are the communication guidelines when a positive case is confirmed?

Communication recommendations will vary depending on the specific circumstances of a case in a school community. At a minimum, the affected cohort will need to be notified. Media is handled in coordination between the school public information officer and the CCHS public information officer.

Will staff or students, diagnosed with COVID-19 need a document to return to school?

No. But someone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 should isolate at home for at least 10 days, plus three days after symptoms subside.

If a parent is diagnosed with COVID-19 will their student need to self-quarantine prior to returning to school? How will the schools know when the student is ok to return?

If a student or staff has a household member that tests positive for COVID-19, the student will be ordered to quarantine at home until 14 days have elapsed since all household members are no longer considered infectious. CCHS may issue an order with explicit [instructions on quarantine](#) and details on its expiration. If needed, CCHS will provide clearance letters at the end of isolation/quarantine.

Health Education:

What are the recommended health education topics schools should provide?

Schools should consider educating students on the importance of healthy hygiene practices, understanding and monitoring for symptoms of COVID-19, physical distancing, and mental health/sources of support.

Facilities - Safety and Sanitation Considerations:

What supplies should be included in every classroom and general area (e.g., office, cafeteria, bathroom) for use by students and employees?

All sinks should have soap. Handwashing stations with soap and/or fragrance-free 60% ethyl alcohol hand sanitizer should be made available in classrooms. Face coverings will be encouraged at all times while indoors.

What are the guidelines for cleaning and sanitation?

Schools will follow disinfection guidelines for classrooms, offices, and outdoor spaces that include the following:

- Consider suspending or modifying the use of site resources that necessitate sharing or touching items
- Staff should clean and disinfect frequently high-touched surfaces within the school and on school buses at least daily and, as practicable, frequently throughout the day
- Buses should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected daily, and after transporting any individual who is exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19
- Limit the use of shared playground equipment
- Limit the sharing of objects and equipment, such as toys, games, and art supplies, to the extent practicable. But where allowed, clean and disinfect between uses

- Establish a cleaning and disinfecting schedule
- Ensure proper ventilation during cleaning and disinfecting

Where might physical barriers need to be installed at school sites and district offices to ensure student and employee safety?

Schools may want to consider installing clear plexiglass barriers at front counters where physical distancing is not possible, similar to how many retailers have done so at check-out counters. Staff workstations should be arranged so that staff can physically distance.

Additional and supporting resources:

- [CDPH Reopening In-Person Learning Framework for K-12 Schools](#)
- [CDPH Schools Guidance FAQs](#)
- [CCHS FAQs](#)
- [CDPH Guidance for the Use of Face Coverings](#)