

## **COVID-19 Guidance for School Response to a COVID-19 Case**

This document is intended to define responsibilities and actions for both MCDPH and school officials as part of a coordinated response if/when a presumptive positive case of COVID-19 is identified in a school.

### **Process for Presumptive Positive in a School**

#### **Prior to a positive case**

##### **If you are made aware of a member of your school community being tested for COVID-19**

- Maintain confidentiality – there is a good chance that this person will be negative and there is no need to communicate this information to more people than need to know
- Begin planning – Did this person have symptoms while in school? How long? Who may be impacted if this person does test positive?
- It is not necessary to call MCDPH.

#### **After Receiving a Presumptive Positive**

##### **Immediate Actions by MCDPH after receiving a presumptive positive case of COVID-19**

MCDPH will receive laboratory results and notify MCDPH incident commander.

- MCDPH will contact healthcare provider of presumptive positive case about laboratory results.
- MCDPH will contact presumptive positive case or parent/guardian about laboratory results.
- MCDPH (A Nurse Epidemiologist) will conduct an interview with the case or parent/guardian to capture information about symptom onset, exposure locations, and close contacts.
- MCDPH will provide the case with information about isolation and symptom monitoring.
- MCDPH will call close contacts to discuss exposure, symptom monitoring, and self-quarantine.
- If close contacts are experiencing symptoms, MCDPH will work with them to get evaluated by a provider and tested.

#### **If MCDPH identifies exposure to school**

##### **Immediate Actions between Public Health and School**

- MCDPH leadership will contact SCHOOL leadership or nurse and notify of the positive case.
- MCDPH will request additional contact information from SCHOOL related to potential exposure (classroom, student lists, etc.).
- MCDPH will conduct additional interviews with close contacts of case.
- MCDPH will plan a conference call with SCHOOL leadership, nurse and communications.
- MCDPH will make recommendations to prevent disease spread and reduce exposure.
- MCDPH and SCHOOL work collaboratively on communications plan to notify school community of the exposure, provide guidance, and manage media.
- SCHOOL should discuss respect of student and staff privacy to help prevent discrimination or unnecessary stigmatization.

- MCDPH and SCHOOL work collaboratively on communications products needed by schools.
- SCHOOL will be requested to set up and operate a hotline for concerned parents/guardians.
- SCHOOL to identify students, teachers, or staff with fever or respiratory symptoms and send them home immediately. Separate symptomatic individuals from others and have them wear a surgical mask until they are home and isolated. When feasible, identify and designate a “sick room” through which others do not regularly pass.
- SCHOOL to require students, teachers, and staff to self-monitor their temperature and symptoms regularly and before they come to school for the day. Symptoms of concern include: fever (subjective or  $>100.4^{\circ}\text{F}$ ), cough, and shortness of breath.
- SCHOOL to communicate to individuals with any fever or respiratory infection symptoms that they should stay home until 72 hours AFTER these symptoms resolve.
- SCHOOL to maintain regular communications with the local public health department.

#### **MCDPH and School Discuss Need for School Closure**

- Consider or discuss impact of school closure based on situation.
- MCDPH, in consultation with the appropriate school official, may consider if school closure is warranted and length of time based on the risk level within the specific community as determined by the MCDPH Director or Medical Director for Disease Control.

### **School Planning Considerations**

#### **Surveillance by School Officials**

- **Contact MCDPH immediately if you detect any concerning clusters of respiratory disease or spikes in absenteeism. Call 602-506-6767 and ask to speak to a surveillance nurse.**

#### **Preventative Measures for Schools**

- Encourage all students, families, and staff to take everyday preventive actions:
  - Stay home when sick.
  - Remain at home until fever has been gone for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medicines.
  - Seek immediate medical care if symptoms become more severe, e.g., high fever or difficulty breathing.
  - Use “respiratory etiquette”. Cover cough with the crook of the elbow, tissue or sleeve.
  - Provide adequate supplies within easy reach, including tissues, hand sanitizer, and no-touch trash cans.
  - Wash hands frequently. Encourage hand washing by students and staff through education, scheduled time for handwashing, and the provision of adequate supplies.
  - Enhance cleaning consistent with CDC guidance (see Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection Recommendations).

### **Policy and Planning Considerations for School Officials**

- School officials should review and implement comprehensive school safety plans, including continuity plans for distance learning and teaching if students are absent from school.
- Ensure sick leave policies allow teachers and staff to stay home if they have symptoms of respiratory infection.
- Consider alternatives to congregate or group programming within the school (e.g., large or communal activities, assemblies). Alternatives might include webcasts of assemblies or intercom announcements.
- Consider implementing staggered recess times to limit the number of students who are together; and if possible, group recess by classrooms.

### **School Closure Considerations and Actions**

- Closing schools is a difficult decision as it impacts students, families, and employers. MCDPH will continue to assess the situation and provide information, as needed.
- In consultation with MCDPH, the school administrator may determine if school closures are warranted. Length of closure time will be based on the risk level within the specific community as determined by the local public health officer.
- School officials should consider communication plans for school closure that include outreach to students, parents, teachers, staff, and the community.
  - Include information for parents regarding labor laws, information regarding Disability Insurance, Paid Family Leave, and Unemployment Insurance.
  - Provide guidance to parents, teachers and staff reminding them of the importance of community social distancing measures while school is closed, including discouraging students or staff from gathering elsewhere. Community social distancing measures include canceling group activities or events, religious services, after-school classes and sporting events. MCDPH has social distancing guidance available.
- Develop a plan for continuity of education, medical and social services, and meal programs and establish alternate mechanisms for these to continue.
  - Determine whether meal programs can continue to be offered when school is closed.
- Work with MCDPH to determine which cleaning protocols, if any, should be deployed at the school prior to reopening the school.
- Determine the timing of return of students and staff, and any additional steps needed for the school to reopen, in consultation with the MCDPH.
- In consultation with MCDPH, school officials may determine readmission criteria after the school closures.