

Administrative Offices

4041 N Central Ave, #1400 • Phoenix, Arizona 85012
Phone: (602) 506-6900 • Fax: (602) 506-6885

WeArePublicHealth.org

[Twitter.com/Maricopahealth](https://twitter.com/Maricopahealth)

[Facebook.com/MCDPH](https://facebook.com/MCDPH)

Dear School Partner,

Thank you for reporting cases of COVID-19 and their in-school close contacts to Maricopa County Department of Public Health (MCDPH). We will investigate the case(s) you reported, which includes notifying the person with COVID-19 that they are to isolate per MCDPH, and follow-up with your school's point-of-contact with any further recommendations for your facility. It is the responsibility of the school to identify any students or staff who meet the close contact definition from COVID-19 exposures in school. Your school's point-of-contact will receive letters from MCDPH for distribution to close contacts informing them of their exposure and that they are to quarantine (if applicable).

While we investigate, you need to:

- [Isolate and exclude ill persons from school](#)
- [Continue infection prevention efforts](#)
- [Facilitate COVID-19 testing available for those with close contact to someone infected with COVID-19](#)

You may also choose to implement these steps while the investigation is ongoing:

- [Determine if reported person has laboratory-confirmed COVID-19](#)
- [Determine infectious timeframe for the person with COVID-19](#)
- [Contact tracing, exclusion, and notification](#)

Please continue to follow your school's internal modified quarantine guidance, if applicable. Included below, you will find links to additional [Resources and Guidance Documents](#) that your school may find helpful.

Thank you for your partnership,



Marcy Flanagan, DBA, MPH, MA
Executive Director



Rebecca Sunenshine, MD, FIDSA
Medical Director



ISOLATE & EXCLUDE ILL PERSONS FROM SCHOOL

Public health goal	Isolate ill person from others to prevent transmission of potential communicable infection to susceptible people.
Question to ask yourself	Are school-associated persons reporting positive COVID-19 testing and/or symptoms consistent with COVID-19*?

Checklist for next steps:

- Per MCDPH, a person with COVID-19 or symptoms consistent with COVID-19* are to be excluded from the facility until they have completed the isolation period outlined in [MCDPH Home Isolation Guidance](#).
- If any staff or student develops any symptoms consistent with COVID-19* that are not known to be a part of a chronic condition (i.e., asthma, allergies) while at school, they are to:
 - Be separated from other staff/students and excluded from the facility as soon as a parent/guardian can pick them up.
 - Remain excluded from the facility, including in-person school and extracurriculars, until they have completed the isolation period outlined in the [MCDPH Home Isolation Guidance](#), which is based on symptoms and COVID-19 test results
- Report cases of COVID-19 (i.e., those who report positive test results to the school) to MCDPH by filling out the [Online School Reporting Survey](#).
 - Please be sure to include your facility's information on the survey report.
 - MCDPH will investigate the case(s), which includes notifying the person with COVID-19 that they are to isolate per MCDPH, and follow-up with your school's point-of-contact with any further recommendations for your facility.
- Isolation and quarantine authority are delegated to the local health jurisdiction as outlined in Arizona Administrative Code and Arizona Revised Statutes. (For additional information please see [AAC 36-624](#) and [ARS R9-6-361](#).)

*Please note that symptoms consistent with COVID-19 include:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Headache
- Muscle pain/body aches
- New loss of taste or smell
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Fatigue (not as a sole symptom in the school setting)

Please continue to check the [CDC website](#) for the most up-to-date list of symptoms of COVID-19.



DETERMINE IF REPORTED PERSON HAS LAB CONFIRMED COVID-19

Public health goal

Confirm that you are acting on a true case by reporting to public health. Verify the lab evidence.

Questions to ask yourself

1. Does the student/staff have a diagnostic laboratory result?
2. Do you have all the lab report information needed to report case to MCDPH?

Background on diagnostic laboratory results:

There are 2 types of tests that are considered **diagnostic** (i.e., detects an active case that may be infectious to others) for an acute COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2) infection.

1. **PCR test:** This COVID-19 test detects genetic material (RNA) of the virus.
 - Typical specimens tested include nasal swab, nasopharyngeal (NP) swab, sputum or saliva
 - Turnaround time ranges from 15 minutes to 2-3 days
2. **Antigen test:** This COVID-19 test detects certain proteins in the virus. (e.g., Abbott BinaxNOW and BinaxNOW at-home tests)
 - Typical specimen tested is a nasal swab
 - Turnaround time is approximately 15 minutes

HELPFUL NOTE: While they sound similar, antigen tests are not the same as antibody tests. Antibody, or “serology,” tests are used to detect a past infection with COVID-19 and require a blood sample to detect the presence of antibodies. Antibody tests are **not** designed to detect an active infection of the virus and should **not** be used for diagnostic purposes.

Checklist for collecting and reviewing the lab information:

- Ask the parent/staff to share a copy of the lab report to aid you in confirming the test type, specimen used, test result, and specimen collected date. If the test used was an at-home rapid antigen, consider requesting a picture of the test to help verify the results.

HELPFUL NOTE: You may see variations of wording for a positive test including *positive* or *detected*. See examples on page 4.

If you are unable to verify the lab result, you may elect to await MCDPH’s full investigation prior to moving on to the next steps OR you may proceed with next steps using the unconfirmed report, should your administration choose to do so. Please note that proceeding with notification and exclusion using unconfirmed reports may result in unneeded quarantine and a requirement for the school to follow up with those individuals.



DETERMINE IF REPORTED PERSON HAS LAB CONFIRMED COVID-19

RESOURCE: Reading a laboratory report

Laboratories report results differently. When you are reviewing a lab result, look for the following 6 key fields. Below are examples of the results that would correspond with a confirmed laboratory result.

1. **Patient name**
2. **Date collected**
3. **Specimen type** – *Nasopharyngeal, nasal swab, sputum, saliva, or respiratory*
4. **Test performed** – *SARS-CoV-2 PCR, NAA+ probe (PCR), Abbot ID NOW (PCR), or BinaxNOW (antigen)*
5. **Result** – *Positive, Detected, or Reactive*
6. **Reference range** (*Indicates what a normal result would be*) - *Negative, Undetected, Non-reactive, Blank*

Examples of COVID-19 laboratory confirmed reports

Case example 1. Positive PCR from a saliva specimen; reference range is blank

Diagnostic Specimen Type: Saliva	Date Collected: 10/13/2020
Test Result Date: 10/14/2020	
Laboratory Test:	
Test Performed: 94845-5 ABCTL-Saliva-SARS-CoV-2 PCR ()	
Result: Positive	
Notes:	
Specimen Notes: Type: Saliva;	
Reference Range:	

Case example 2. Positive PCR from a nasopharyngeal swab; result = detected; reference range = undetected

Diagnostic Specimen Type: Nasopharyngeal swab	Date Collected: 10/14/2020
Test Result Date: 10/15/2020	
Laboratory Test:	
Test Performed: 94500-6 SARS-CoV-2 RNA Resp QI NAA+probe (SARS-CoV-2 RNA PCR)	
Result: 260373001 Detected SCT	
Notes:	
Specimen Notes: :	
Reference Range: Undetected	

Case example 3. Positive antigen (Quidel Sofia) from a nasal swab; result = positive; reference range = blank

Diagnostic Specimen Type: Nasal Swab	Date Collected: 11/09/2020
Test Result Date: 11/09/2020	
Laboratory Test:	
Test Performed: 95209-3 Quidel Sofia SARS Antigen FIA ()	
Result: Positive	
Notes:	
Specimen Notes: Type: Nasal Swab;	
Reference Range:	



DETERMINE INFECTIOUS TIMEFRAME FOR PERSON WITH COVID-19

Public health goal	Determine when the positive person was infectious and whether there was a school exposure.
Question to ask yourself	Was the person with lab-confirmed COVID-19 on the school campus during their infectious period?

Background on infectious period:

A person with COVID-19 is considered infectious from 2 days before their symptom onset (or 2 days before their positive test collection date if they are asymptomatic) until they have completed the time frame outlined in the [MCDPH Home Isolation Guidance](#).

Checklist for recommended next steps:

- Utilize the information obtained from staff, parent, or student to help determine the start of the infectious timeframe for the COVID-19 positive person.
 - Asymptomatic COVID-19 positive person:
 - Subtract two days from test date (date the specimen was collected) for the start date of the infectious timeframe. “Date collected” is on the lab report.
 - Example: A student’s lab report confirms a positive PCR test collected on 10/10/21 and the parent confirms the student did not have any symptoms. The start of the infectious timeframe would be 10/8/21.
 - Symptomatic COVID-19 positive person:
 - Subtract two days from date of first symptom for onset of infectious timeframe.
 - Example: A staff member’s lab report confirms a positive antigen test collected on 10/10/21. In speaking with the staff, they report a mild cough starting on 10/6/21. The start of the infectious timeframe would be 10/4/21.
- Utilize the [MCDPH Home Isolation Guidance and Isolation Guidance Tool](#), to help determine how long the COVID-19 positive person must be excluded per Public Health. The flow chart on the Isolation Guidance can be helpful to determine when the isolation period is complete, and the person would no longer be considered infectious.
- Utilize your attendance records and staff/parent information to determine if the person attended during the infectious timeframe and what classes/activities they attended.
- Isolation and quarantine authority are delegated to the local health jurisdiction as outlined in Arizona Administrative Code and Arizona Revised Statutes. (For additional information please see [AAC 36-624](#) and [ARS R9-6-361](#).)



CONTACT TRACING, EXCLUSION & NOTIFICATION

Public health goal

Determine who was a close contact with the person who tested positive for COVID-19 during the infectious period and exclude them from school to prevent further transmission if they are to quarantine per Public Health. Please follow your school's internal modified quarantine guidance, if applicable.

Questions to ask yourself

1. Who are the staff/students who are close contacts to the person with COVID-19?
2. How should I notify the close contacts?
3. How long do I exclude close contacts from school who are to quarantine per Public Health?

Checklist for determining who was a close contact to the person with COVID-19:

- Utilize the COVID-19 positive person's infectious timeframe & the classes/activities the person attended while infectious to determine possible exposure dates and locations for your facility.
 - The potential exposure timeframe (timeframe when the COVID-19 positive person attended school while infectious) was from _____ to _____ in the _____ classroom/ _____ school activity/ _____ sports team.
- OR**
- Person was NOT on campus and did NOT attend any school activities at any time during the infectious timeframe.
- Identify students and staff who are close contacts of the person with COVID-19. **Per CDC, ADHS, and MCDPH, a close contact is anyone who was within 6 feet of a person with COVID-19 while infectious for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period.**
 - **Exception:** In the K-12 school setting, **students who were within 3-6 feet** of an infected student are **not** considered close contacts if **both students** were engaged in consistent and correct use of well-fitting masks at all times. This exception does not apply to teachers, staff, or other adults in the classroom setting.

HELPFUL NOTE: If person with COVID-19 was NOT on the campus at any time during the infectious timeframe, then there is NO exposure to your school and NO need for contact tracing or notification.



CONTACT TRACING, EXCLUSION & NOTIFICATION

If an exposure is determined:

- ❑ As part of the case investigation, send MCDPH a line list of students and staff who are identified as close contacts by filling out the exposed person portion of the [Online School Reporting Survey](#).
- ❑ Once an exposed person line list is received, MCDPH will notify close contacts of their exposure and the requirement to quarantine (if applicable) as well as offer daily quarantine symptom monitoring.
- ❑ Your school's point-of-contact will receive letters from MCDPH for distribution to close contacts informing them of their exposure and that they are to quarantine (if applicable).

Checklist for school notification of **all close contacts**:

- ❑ Send the MCDPH notification letter on MCDPH letterhead to parents/guardians & staff to inform them of their (their child's) exposure.
 - Provide them with the [MCDPH Quarantine Guidance](#)
 - Share information for fully vaccinated persons:
 - [CDC Guidance for When You've Been Fully Vaccinated](#)

Checklist for determining length of exclusion from campus for **close contacts who are to quarantine per Public Health**:

- ❑ **Per MCDPH, and in accordance with CDC and ADHS guidance, close contacts who are not up to date on their COVID-19 vaccinations or have not had a documented positive test for COVID-19 in the last 90 days are to quarantine at home for up to 10 days.** This includes being excluded from in-person school and extracurricular activities.
- ❑ Please see [MCDPH's Quarantine Guidance](#) for additional information & exceptions to quarantine
- ❑ Isolation and quarantine authority are delegated to the local health jurisdiction as outlined in Arizona Administrative Code and Arizona Revised Statutes. (For additional information please see [AAC 36-624](#) and [ARS R9-6-361](#).)

HELPFUL NOTE: The timeframe for quarantine is determined using the LAST day of possible exposure as Day 0, then counting the number of days moving forward.

Additional considerations for all close contacts:

- ❑ Close contacts can develop COVID-19 for up to 14 days after their last COVID-19 exposure, therefore close contacts should consider getting tested for COVID-19 on or after 5 days from their last exposure, practice physical distancing, and wear a mask for at least 10 days after their last exposure, regardless of COVID-19 vaccination status.
- ❑ If a close contact experiences any symptoms consistent with COVID-19, they are to stay home and be evaluated for COVID-19, including getting tested. If a close contact tests positive (or elects not



CONTACT TRACING, EXCLUSION & NOTIFICATION

to be tested) for COVID-19 by PCR or antigen test, they are to follow [Maricopa County's Isolation Guidance](#). People infected with COVID-19 are to isolate at home regardless of vaccination status.

If a school begins the investigation and exclusion process, MCDPH will be concurrently investigating the reported person with COVID-19 and will reach out to the school point-of-contact with the findings of our investigation. If discrepancies are determined between the report and the investigation findings (e.g., person was determined to have a negative test result), then the school will be responsible for reaching back out to the notified persons with the updated information.

If you submitted a list of students and staff who were exposed via the Online School Reporting Survey and later determined there was no exposure, please email MCDPHcontacttracing@maricopa.gov to have persons withdrawn from the MCDPH daily quarantine monitoring system.



CONTINUE INFECTION PREVENTION EFFORTS

Continue to implement prevention strategies to reduce transmission in schools:

- ❑ MCDPH aligns with CDC guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools. Please see [CDC's Guidance](#) for more information.
- ❑ Promote vaccination – Vaccination among all eligible students, teachers, staff, and household members is the most critical strategy to help schools safely resume full operations.
- ❑ Consistent and correct mask use – MCDPH, in alignment with CDC and ADHS, recommends indoor masking for all individuals age 2 years and older, including students, teachers, staff, and visitors, regardless of vaccination status.
- ❑ Physical distancing – Maintain at least 3 feet of physical distance between students within classrooms.
- ❑ Testing of symptomatic students, staff, faculty, and close contacts – Testing (or sending a test home) of people who have any symptom consistent with COVID-19 and those determined to be close contacts.
- ❑ Ventilation – Improving ventilation is an important COVID-19 prevention strategy that can reduce the number of virus particles in the air. Along with other preventive strategies — including wearing a well-fitting, multi-layered mask — bringing fresh outdoor air into a building helps keep virus particles from concentrating inside. This can be done by opening multiple doors and windows, using child-safe fans to increase the effectiveness of open windows, and making changes to the HVAC or air filtration systems.
- ❑ Handwashing and respiratory etiquette – People should practice handwashing and respiratory etiquette (covering coughs and sneezes) to keep from getting and spreading infectious illnesses including COVID-19. Schools can monitor and reinforce these behaviors and provide adequate handwashing supplies.
- ❑ Staying home when sick and getting tested – Students, teachers, and staff who have symptoms of infectious illness, such as influenza (flu) or COVID-19, should stay home and be referred to their healthcare provider for testing and care, regardless of vaccination status.
- ❑ Contact tracing, in combination with isolation and quarantine – Continue to collaborate with state and local health departments to provide information about people diagnosed with or exposed to COVID-19.
- ❑ Cleaning and disinfection – In general, cleaning once a day is usually enough to sufficiently remove potential virus that may be on surfaces. Disinfecting (using disinfectants on the [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency COVID-19 list](#)) removes any remaining germs on surfaces, which further reduces risk of spreading infection.



CONTINUE INFECTION PREVENTION EFFORTS

- Follow MCDPH and CDC recommendations for school-sponsored sports and extracurricular activities as outlined in [CDC's Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools](#).
 - For more specific sports guidance, refer to: [AIA Return to Activity Guidelines](#) & [AIA Sport Specific Modifications](#).

Schools should:

- ✓ Develop a system to monitor all staff for fever and symptoms consistent with COVID-19*.
- ✓ Reinforce that staff should not report to work when ill.
- ✓ Ask employees to report known COVID-19 exposures to the designated personnel.
- ✓ Strongly consider recommending students, staff, faculty, and visitors wear face masks (cloth or otherwise) while indoors at school.

Staff and students should **NOT**:

- × Be required to provide a healthcare provider's note if they are sick to confirm their illness or to return to work/school if they have completed the isolation period as outlined in [MCDPH Home Isolation Guidance](#).
- × Be required to have a negative COVID-19 test to return to work/school.

*Please note that symptoms consistent with COVID-19 include:

- | | | |
|---|------------------------------|---|
| • Fever or chills | • Headache | • Diarrhea |
| • Cough | • Muscle pain/body aches | • Fatigue (not as a sole symptom in the school setting) |
| • Sore throat | • New loss of taste or smell | |
| • Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing | • Congestion or runny nose | |
| | • Nausea or vomiting | |

Please continue to check the [CDC website](#) for the most up-to-date list of symptoms of COVID-19



COVID-19 TESTING AVAILABLE FOR SYMPTOMATIC PEOPLE & CLOSE CONTACTS

Public health goal

1) Identify others who might be ill, exclude them from in-person learning, and offer them COVID-19 testing; and 2) Identify close contacts and offer them testing to ensure they are not infected and end quarantine when criteria are met per [MCDPH Quarantine Guidance](#)

Question to ask yourself

Do we have additional symptomatic or asymptomatic people in our school community who are infected with COVID-19?

In order to support our schools with testing requests from students/staff who have symptoms consistent with COVID-19* or have been in contact with a COVID-19 positive person, Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) and Maricopa County Department of Public Health (MCDPH) have worked to develop a system to supply schools with BinaxNOW Self-Tests for the rapid detection of COVID-19 in K-12 students and staff. This testing program augments resources already available in the community and in schools including existing BinaxNOW testing initiatives, pooled testing provided through ADHS, and community testing events and sites such as retail pharmacies.

Schools can now order these test kits through the MCDPH resource request tool ([PPE.maricopa.gov](https://ppe.maricopa.gov)).

Please refer to the following documents for additional information:

- [BinaxNOW Antigen Self-Test Guidance Letter for Schools](#)
- [BinaxNOW Antigen Self-Test Instructions \(English/Spanish\)](#)
- [BinaxNOW Antigen Self-Test Information Sheet for Families and Staff](#)

*Please note that symptoms consistent with COVID-19 include:

- | | | |
|---|------------------------------|---|
| • Fever or chills | • Headache | • Diarrhea |
| • Cough | • Muscle pain/body aches | • Fatigue (not as a sole symptom in the school setting) |
| • Sore throat | • New loss of taste or smell | |
| • Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing | • Congestion or runny nose | |
| | • Nausea or vomiting | |

Please continue to check the [CDC website](https://www.cdc.gov) for the most up-to-date list of symptoms of COVID-19



Resources & Guidance Documents

MCDPH and CDC guidance documents to assist in your school exposure:

- [MCDPH Home Isolation Guidance](#)
- [MCDPH Home Isolation Guidance - Spanish](#)
- [Quarantine and Social Distancing Guidelines](#)
- [Quarantine and Social Distancing Guidelines - Spanish](#)
- [MCDPH School-based Modified Quarantine Guidance](#)
- [Copy of letter from MCDPH to close contacts in K-12 settings – Students *\(for reference only\)*](#)
- [Copy of letter from MCDPH to close contacts in K-12 settings – Staff *\(for reference only\)*](#)
- [CDC Guidance for When You've Been Fully Vaccinated](#)
- [CDC Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools](#)
-

Additional resources:

- MCDPH COVID-19 webpage: [maricopa.gov/coronavirus](https://www.maricopa.gov/coronavirus).
- MCDPH COVID-19 Schools webpage: <https://www.maricopa.gov/5493/K-12-Schools-and-Childcare-Facilities>
- MCDPH has a dedicated email and hotline to receive public health inquiries from school parents:
 - Email address: COVIDparenthotline@maricopa.gov
 - Hotline: 2-1-1, option 6 for the COVID-19 hotline, option 3 for parents