

Massachusetts DESE Protocols if a Student or Staffer Tests Positive for COVID-19

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<https://www.masslive.com/news/2020/07/what-if-a-student-tests-positive-for-coronavirus-massachusetts-education-officials-outline-reopening-protocols-for-schools.html>

What if a student or school staff member exhibits symptoms of COVID-19?

They [should] get tested for an active COVID-19 infection and the result return as negative prior to returning to school.

What are symptoms of COVID-19?

The symptoms include:

- Fever (100.4° Fahrenheit or higher), chills, or shaking chills
- Cough (not due to other known cause, such as chronic cough)
- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Headache *when in combination with other symptoms*
- Muscle aches or body aches
- Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea
- Fatigue, when in combination with other symptoms
- Nasal congestion or runny nose (not due to other known causes, such as allergies) *when in combination with other symptoms*

Where can my child get tested?

If you can direct parents to any local testing resources, that information would go here.

Will COVID-19 testing be offered in schools?

As of now, it is not recommended by MA state education officials. Students and staff should discuss testing with their health care providers.

A student is tested, and the results come back negative for COVID-19. When can they return to school?

The student can return to school once they are asymptomatic for at least 24 hours.

What if a student tests positive?

Remain home. Notify the school of the results, the local [county] health [official] and people with whom the child has been in close contact with recently. "Most people who have

relatively mild illness will need to stay in self-isolation for at least 10 days and until at least 3 days have passed with no fever and improvement in other symptoms,” the guidance states.

What if my child is symptomatic but I cannot get them tested?

MA state guidance tells parents to [have their child] remain home in self-isolation for 14 days from when symptom(s) first presented.

What action will occur if a student exhibits symptoms on the school bus?

Education officials emphasize that families are “the most important first line of defense for monitoring symptoms.” Students are expected to stay home if they exhibit symptoms of COVID-19.

Bus drivers and monitors will be trained to watch for possible symptomatic students. If a student shows symptoms of being sick while getting on the bus, MA state education officials said they should not be allowed to board and their caregiver should take them home. That protocol assumes a parent or guardian is waiting at the bus stop with the student.

If a student exhibits symptoms on the bus, they must keep their mask on and distance from other students. The bus driver will place a call to the bus service dispatch to contact the school regarding the possibly symptomatic child.

Upon arrival, the school nurse or other designee will evaluate the student. If they exhibit symptoms, they will be placed in the designated medical waiting room to be picked up by their parent or guardian.

What if a student is symptomatic at school?

The student will be evaluated by the school nurse or other designee for symptoms. If they exhibit symptoms, they will be placed in the designated medical waiting room to be picked up by their parent or guardian.

What if a staffer is symptomatic at school?

If a staff person develops symptoms during the day they should see the school nurse or other designee to be evaluated for symptoms. If it is determined there are no COVID-19 symptoms, they must follow the school’s standard protocols for being excused due to illness. If COVID-19 symptoms are presented, they must head home then follow testing protocols.

If their test returns negative, they must stay home until they are asymptomatic for 24 hours.

If their test returns positive, they must remain at home. Notify the school of the results, the local [county] health [official] and people with whom the staffer has been in close contact with recently.

A family member or another person my child was in close contact with tested positive. What should I do?

If the child was at home when their parent or guardian learned of the possible exposure, they should be kept at home and be tested four to five days after their most recent exposure to the person.

If they are at school when the possible exposure is learned of, MA state guidance calls for the student to be “masked for the remainder of the day (including K-1 students) and adhere to strict physical distancing. At the end of the day, they should go home and should not take the bus home. They should stay at home and be tested 4 or 5 days after their last exposure.”

After being tested, they should follow the above-outlined protocols for if they test negative, positive or are not tested.

How will a school respond to a student or staff member testing positive for COVID-19?

The school will determine when the last time the student or staffer was on school grounds two days prior to the onset of symptoms - or testing if they were asymptomatic. The school must close off areas visited by the positive student or staffer so they can be cleaned and disinfected prior to reopening. If the student or staffer traveled on the school bus, it must be disinfected as well.

For elementary schools: Communication will be sent to other families in the student’s class to notify them of a positive test without naming the person. Those who may have gotten within six feet of the student or staffer will be urged to get self-quarantine and get tested four to five days after their last exposure to the person. If they choose not to get tested, they must remain home for 14 days.

For middle and high school students: As students in upper grades may shift between classrooms more, the school will contact staffers and families of students in classes throughout the student’s scheduled day.

Students who were within six feet of the individual in class or on the school bus will be urged to get self-quarantine and get tested four to five days after their last exposure to the person. If they choose not to get tested, they must remain home for 14 days.

Multiple students and/or staff members test positive. Will the school close?

“If there is more than one confirmed COVID-19 case (students or staff) in the school at one time, or if there is a series of single cases in a short time span, school leaders and the superintendent should work with the local [county] health [officials] to determine if it is likely that there is transmission happening in school,” MA state guidance says.

When there is in-school transmission beyond a single classroom or cohort, school officials may close part of the school or the entire school for several days for an extensive cleaning - likely one to three days - or close the school fully or partially for two weeks to allow for a school-wide quarantine period.

If multiple cases are present in multiple schools, district officials must consult with the local [county] health [officials] in determining if there will be a district-wide closure for several days or weeks.

If a school decides to close, it will immediately transition to remote learning.

My community is seeing a growing number of COVID-19 cases. Will the schools close?

“In the case of a significant municipal outbreak, as determined by the local [county] health [officials] or DPHHS, the superintendent and school leaders must consult with the local [county] health [officials] to determine whether it is appropriate to close a specific school, schools, or an entire district,” the MA guidance states.

Will there be another MA statewide transition to remote learning?

It is likely. Each district is being asked to outline how they welcome back students for in-person learning at the start of the school year, a mix of in-person and remote learning and exclusively remote learning. Districts are expected to invite as many students back into the school as possible for in-person learning this fall though be prepared for shifting back to remote learning temporarily or for an extended period again.

Each plan must offer remote learning for children who cannot safely return to the classroom due to underlying medical conditions.