

# COVID-19 Health Manual

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CITY OF NEWTON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

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# Prevention

## Public Health Risk Mitigation Pillars

### 1. Face coverings

- Must cover mouth and nose and be made of at least two layers of material fit securely and comfortably against the side of the face

### 2. Physical distancing: Maintain appropriate distance to prevent exposure

- Stay at least 6 ft. away from others when possible (classrooms will be arranged to maintain distancing)

### 3. Hygiene: Keep hands and the environment clean

- Wash hands frequently with soap and water and use hand sanitizer when soap and water not available
- Students and staff will be encouraged to perform hand hygiene frequently throughout the day

### 4. Avoid exposure to illness: Stay home if sick

- Students and staff who are sick should not attend school in person.
- Staff and families will be provided with a health self-assessment tool they are expected to use every morning before coming into school

# Classrooms and Offices

## Classrooms

- Classrooms have been configured to reduce the risk of virus transmission
  - Desks have been placed 6 ft. between them and are all facing the same direction
  - It is expected that students will pass closer than 6 ft. when getting to and from their seats- and this is acceptable
  - Students should be assigned specific seats and teachers must be able to provide accurate information about seating arrangements to assist with contact tracing if needed

## Offices

- Workspaces will be set up to remain 6 ft. apart from others
- Office equipment that is shared (copiers etc.) should have hand sanitizer available. Building administrators should determine a procedure for regular cleaning of shared office equipment

# Lunch/Recess



Students must be a minimum of 6 ft. apart, increase distance when feasible



Follow appropriate hand hygiene procedures before and after eating and before and after recess



Students should properly remove face coverings when eating, Consider using recess as a mask break if physical distance can be maintained



Students must be in a designated seat that has been recorded by the teacher and is able to be provided to health officials if required



Masks should be put back on before the student leaves their seat after eating

# COVID-19 Infection in Newton Public Schools

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Public health metrics in MA remain favorable, promoting the decision to open schools with a modified in person option. However it is realistic to assume that there will be scenarios in which someone who has the virus is in NPS school buildings.


## **The public health mitigation pillars:**

Physical distancing

Face coverings

Hand hygiene

Staying home when you are ill



Significantly reduce risk of acquiring the virus if you are exposed to someone who is infected

## How COVID-19 is spread

The virus is spread largely by person-to-person respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks in proximity to another person.

Long range airborne transmission does not appear to be a primary way COVID-19 spreads.

## Can COVID-19 be transmitted via surfaces?

This is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

Although the virus can survive for a short time on some surfaces and can be spread from touching surfaces then touching the mouth, nose, or eyes, this is unlikely.

Regular cleaning of high touch surfaces will take place by facilities staff.

The best way to protect against transmission via surfaces is to wash your hands frequently and/or use hand sanitizer.

## COVID-19 Case Investigation and Contact Tracing

Prompt case investigation and contact tracing help control the spread of COVID-19

The local health department or contact tracer from the Community Tracing Collaborative interviews the individual who tested positive to determine who they may have had close contact with during their infectious period (2 days before symptom onset or specimen collection date if asymptomatic)

The individual will be provided with instructions on proper isolation procedures and support.

Individuals who test positive for COVID-19 are monitored by public health officials and only public health authorities have the authority to discontinue isolation for an individual who tests positive for COVID-19



## Definition of a close contact

Someone who has been less than 6 ft. from a COVID-19 positive case for at least 10-15 min. during the case's infectious period (starts 2 days before symptom onset, or specimen collection date for cases who are asymptomatic) and ends when the case has been released from isolation by a public health authority.

# Testing

Testing provides vital information regarding the health status of people who may be infected with COVID-19 and helps restrict the potential spread of the virus. This is an important tool, especially coupled with the other tools of quarantine, isolation, and the public health risk mitigation pillars referenced earlier.

NPS and HHS are following MDPH and CDC guidelines and recommending COVID-19 testing in scenarios when an individual is symptomatic with relevant symptoms or when an individual has been identified as a close contact of a positive individual.

# Surveillance Testing

**Surveillance testing-** The universal, routine testing of all members of the school community

The CDC, MDPH and DESE are all in agreement that surveillance testing is not essential for the operation of schools at this time in Massachusetts. While surveillance testing is an important tool in fighting this pandemic, it is only one of many methods to reduce risk.

NPS is implementing proven strategies to minimize the potential for viral transmission in the school setting that include but are not limited to:

- Physical distancing of 6 ft.
- Mandatory face coverings
- Hand washing & sanitizing
- Maximization of fresh air exchange in buildings

## How to get tested

If you have symptoms or are an identified close contact, you should reach out to your health care provider for guidance. It is always important to be in contact with your own physician whenever possible so that the medical advice you receive is specifically tailored to your health profile.

Most doctors will be able to order a test when one is required. Your doctor will be able to support you through your results and advise you on follow-up care.

The State also has an interactive map on their website that lists all the testing sites available nearby, many of which people can access on their own if they prefer. Right now these include some State sponsored sites that are free.

## Safety Net Testing

The City of Newton expects to have an agreement with Newton-Wellesley Hospital (NWH) to support our community members who do not currently have access to COVID-19 testing because they don't have a healthcare provider, are un/underinsured, or have other extenuating circumstances.

For these uniquely vulnerable individuals, HHS will conduct an assessment (including determining whether they are experiencing COVID-19 related symptoms or have been in recent close contact to a COVID-19 positive individual) and provide a referral for a test at NWH if all criteria are met.

**\*Please note that access to this safety net testing at NWH is only available with a referral from HHS staff so do not contact the hospital directly.**

# Protocols for Possible COVID-19 scenarios

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While specific protocols may vary, there are common elements for many of the possible COVID-19 scenarios:

- Evaluate symptoms
- Separate from others
- Clean and disinfect spaces occupied by the person
- Contact a healthcare provider for assessment and testing. Stay at home while awaiting results
- Tell the school nurse, principal (or designee) if you are being tested and immediately share your result once it is available. This information is fully protected under medical confidentiality laws and your privacy will be maintained.

## Student or staff tests positive for COVID-19

1. HHS will be notified of positive cases through the Commonwealth's secure online system
2. The positive case must isolate at home for a minimum of 10 days from symptom onset (specimen collection date for asymptomatic cases). People with positive diagnostic test may resume public activities after 10 days and once they have:
  - a) Experienced 24 hours without a fever (without taking fever reducing medication)
  - b) Experienced improvement in other symptoms (for example their cough has significantly improved)
  - c) Received clearance from a public health authority
3. HHS will notify the school nurse, school principal (or designee) of the positive case
4. Close contacts (determined via case investigation) will be notified directly of their exposure

# School notifications and data sharing

Notifications will be provided regarding positive COVID-19 cases:

- All individuals who are identified as a close contact of someone who is diagnosed with COVID-19 will be notified directly.
- The building-based school community and affected classroom(s) will be notified if the individual was in school during their infectious period
  - No identifying information will be shared
  - Reminder- individuals who are identified as a close contact will be notified directly (if you do not receive a notification, you were not identified as a close contact)
- HHS will post district-wide data on our COVID-19 data webpage



## Thresholds for Closure

The state has established a standard metric for when a community needs to close in-person schooling. The benchmark is that a community who has an average daily case rate of more than 8 cases per 100,000 residents during the prior 14-day period needs to shift to an all remote learning environment. You can find more information about this metric and track Newton's status here: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/community-level-covid-19-data-reporting>

## Thresholds for closure (cont.)

Individual school or specific portions of a school community (grade level, class, etc.) may be required to shift to remote if there is evidence of significant viral transmission happening in the school setting. This determination will be made in conjunction with our partners at DPH but initially we will use the criteria for possible cluster for assessing whether a closure is warranted. This includes:

- If 2 or more students/staff within the classroom develop COVID-19 within 14 days **and** transmission/exposure occurred in the classroom
- If more than 3% of the cohort/grade (at least 3 individuals) develop COVID-19 within 14 days **and** transmission/exposure occurred in the classroom
- If more than 3% of the same school develops COVID-19 within 14 days and there is evidence of transmission in the school
- If more than 3% of the staff within the same school develop COVID-19 within 14 days and there is evidence of transmission among the staff
- If 2 or more students on the same bus develop COVID-19 within 14 days

\*In all scenarios, we are looking for evidence of viral transmission that has happened in the school setting. There may be numbers of positive cases within the school community where a case investigation identifies exposure in a non-school setting, and these would not automatically lead to closure except in the case of the average daily positive case count listed above.

# Thank you!

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Questions?

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