



## **Return to School Policy**

**A. Purpose.** The purpose of this Policy is to set the guidelines by which a student or staff member who has experienced any of the below may return to the School's premises. These guidelines are to be in compliance with applicable guidance at all times. If at anytime these guidelines do not comply with this guidance the School shall endeavor to update this Policy as soon as possible and may, in the meantime, refer students, legal guardians, and staff directly to the New Mexico Department of Health's (NMDOH), the New Mexico Public Education Department's (NMPED) website, or any other applicable governmental entity website for current guidance.

1. "Close Contact" with a non-household member positive for COVID-19.;
2. Living with a household member that tested positive for COVID-19;
3. A positive test for COVID-19 and/or symptomatic of COVID-19 where the individual does not have a severe illness or severe immunosuppression;
4. A positive test for COVID-19 and/or symptomatic of COVID-19 where the individual has a severe illness or severe immunosuppression;
5. Acute COVID-19-like Symptoms;
6. COVID-19-like Symptoms from a Chronic Condition.

**B.** For the purposes of this Policy and pursuant to guidance from NMDOH and NMPED "close contact" occurs when someone who over a 24-hour period, has a cumulative exposure of fifteen minutes or longer within six feet of a confirmed COVID-19 case with or without a face covering.

Exception: In the K–12 indoor classroom setting, the close contact definition excludes students who were within 3 to 6 feet of an infected student (laboratory-confirmed or a clinically compatible illness) where

1. Both students were engaged in consistent and correct use of well-fitting face masks; and
2. Other K–12 school prevention strategies (such as universal and correct mask use, physical distancing, increased ventilation) were in place in the K–12 school setting.

This exception does not apply to teachers, staff, or other adults in the indoor classroom setting.

C. For the purposes of this Policy proof of vaccination may be in the form of the vaccination card indicating the individual completed a course of COVID-19 vaccination at least 14 days prior to the current date or a print out or screen shot from NMVaxView indicating the individual completed a course of COVID-19 vaccination at least 14 days prior to the current date.

**D. “Close Contact” with a non-household member positive for COVID-19.**

In order to return to School premises or events the following criteria must be met:

1. At least 5 consecutive days have passed since the day after the last date of contact with the infected individual;
2. No one in the student or staff member’s family has tested positive for COVID-19 since the date of exposure; and
3. The student or staff member has not developed symptoms since the date of exposure.

**Exception:** For the first 90 days after a positive PCR or school-based BinaxNOW test, individuals who have had COVID-19 infections and who have completed their self-isolation periods, do not need to quarantine if they are a close contact of a COVID-19 infectious person. It is recommended that the individual get tested for COVID-19 five days after exposure if asymptomatic, and should isolate and test immediately if symptoms develop.

**Exception:** Individuals who have had close contact with a COVID-19 infectious individual are not required to quarantine if they are up to date with COVID-19 vaccinations. “Up to date” means the individual has had both shots of the Moderna or Pfizer vaccination or one shot of the Johnson and Johnson and that the individual has also had one booster shot of any brand of vaccine.

**However,** if a vaccinated individual develops symptoms following the close contact, they must quarantine under section H of this Policy and are strongly encouraged to be tested.

**E. Living with a household member positive for COVID-19.**

Quarantine for household members is 10 days from symptom onset date or positive test so long as no other COVID-19 infections are identified in the household and there are no severely immune-suppressed individuals in the home.

If a second individual in the home tests positive then the quarantine clock is reset and the 10 days of quarantine starts from the symptom onset date or positive test date for the second positive individual.

If the household member positive for COVID-19 has a severe illness or severe immunosuppression the individual having contact and living in the home with that household member will need to quarantine for 20 days after that member’s symptom

onset or positive test. The individual will then quarantine for an additional 10 days after. This is a total of 30 days of quarantine.

**Exception:** For the first 90 days after a positive PCR or school-based BinaxNOW test, individuals who have had COVID-19 infections and who have completed their self-isolation periods, do not need to quarantine if they are a close contact of a COVID-19 infectious person. It is recommended that the individual get tested for COVID-19 five days after exposure if asymptomatic, and should isolate and test immediately if symptoms develop.

**Exception:** Individuals who have had close contact with a COVID-19 infectious individual are not required to quarantine if they are up to date with COVID-19 vaccinations. “Up to date” means the individual has had both shots of the Moderna or Pfizer vaccination or one shot of the Johnson and Johnson and that the individual has also had one booster shot of any brand of vaccine.

**However,** if a vaccinated individual develops symptoms following the close contact, they must quarantine and are strongly encouraged to be tested.

**F. A positive test for COVID-19 where the individual does not have a severe illness or severe immunosuppression.**

1. If the individual is symptomatic, at least 5 consecutive days of isolation have passed since the day after symptoms first appeared or since the positive test and vigilant mask wearing will occur for 5 additional consecutive days; or
2. If the individual is asymptomatic, at least 5 consecutive days of isolation have passed since their first positive test specimen was collected and vigilant mask wearing will occur for 5 additional consecutive days; and
3. At least 1 day (24 hours) has passed with no fever without the use of fever-reducing medications; and
4. There is improvement in symptoms.

Students and staff members who test positive with an at-home rapid COVID test kit need to self-isolate, and the school should notify close contacts of exposure. A negative PCR test with a sample collected within 48 hours of the positive at-home rapid COVID test would negate the positive test and would not require continued self-isolation based off of the at-home rapid COVID test. This only applies to those persons who are asymptomatic and not considered a close contact.

**G. A positive test for COVID-19 where the individual has a severe illness or severe immunosuppression.** In order to return to School premises or events the following criteria must be met:

1. At least 20 consecutive days of isolation have passed since the day after symptoms first appeared or since the positive test.

Students and staff members who test positive with an at-home rapid COVID test kit need to self-isolate, and the school should notify close contacts of exposure. A negative PCR test with a sample collected within 48 hours of the positive at-home rapid COVID test would negate the positive test and would not require continued self-isolation based off of the at-home rapid COVID test. This only applies to those persons who are asymptomatic and not considered a close contact.

## H. COVID-19-like Acute Symptoms

Both vaccinated and unvaccinated students and staff with **no known exposure** to COVID-19 but with new onset COVID-19 symptoms, such as headache or runny nose, will be sent home from school to self-isolate for 5 days and are encouraged to test. Over-the-counter (OTC) rapid antigen COVID tests taken at home may be used when accompanied with a signed assurance from the individual tested, or if under the age of 18, the individual's parent or legal guardian.

**Exception:** If the student or staff member provides proof of a negative PCR test result (or two rapid antigen test results taken 24–48 hours apart), they may return to school before the full 5 days of isolation. If they decide not to test, they must isolate for the full 5 days.

**However:** if an unvaccinated symptomatic person has had a **known exposure** to COVID-19, the person should be tested at five days after exposure and must quarantine for the full 5 days regardless of a negative test unless they are participating in a test to stay program.

## I. COVID-19-like from a Chronic Condition.

1. Students who have not provided evidence of vaccination and who exhibit chronic, mild non-specific COVID-19 symptoms should have their symptoms assessed either by a school nurse or primary care provider.
  - a. If there are no changes in symptoms from the baseline state, students do not need to be tested and may participate in school.
  - b. If students have a change in symptoms from their baseline as assessed either by a school nurse or a primary care provider, then the students should be tested for COVID-19 and be placed in isolation until the results are available. A negative result will discontinue the isolation.
  - c. If a student has a change in their baseline state and the student does not get tested, the student must self-isolate for 5 days and be fever-free without fever reducing medication for 24 hours and have improving symptoms before returning to school.
2. Staff with allergies, asthma, or other non-infectious chronic disease which may present with mild non-specific COVID-19 symptoms should contact their primary care provider. The primary care provider may furnish the staff member with medical documentation stating that present, non-specific mild symptoms do not differ from the patient's baseline, indicating the individual may return to school without being tested for COVID-19.
3. Students or staff who have not provided evidence of COVID-19 vaccination, who have tested negative for COVID-19 in the past two weeks and who have no known exposure to

COVID-19, do not need to be tested again in the presence of chronic symptoms that have not changed in a meaningful way during that interval. If those symptoms were to change from their baseline, then the student or staff should begin home isolation.

**Exception:** Students or staff with mild, chronic conditions, such as asthma or allergies, who have not provided evidence of COVID-19 vaccination and who receive a negative BinaxNOW COVID-19 antigen test, are not required to quarantine and may participate in school and extracurricular activities until such time as the individual has a positive COVID-19 test or has a change in symptoms.

#### **J. Notification**

1. Any staff member experiencing any of the above situations must notify the Head Administrator immediately to arrange for an alternative work setting or for leave under the Coronavirus Emergency Paid Sick Leave Policy if also unable to telework.
2. If the individual is a student, the student or legal guardian should notify the Head Administrator immediately so that arrangements for the student to be kept current with his or her or their school work can be made.

#### **K. Penalties for Non-Compliance.**

1. Failure of a staff member to comply with this Policy may result in disciplinary action including termination or discharge.
2. Failure of a student or legal guardian to comply with this Policy may result in disciplinary action including suspension from school.

Updated 4/5/2022