

# DEFINING COVID-19 OUTBREAKS IN SCHOOLS

## Definitions

**Confirmed case:** A person who has tested positive for the COVID-19 virus using a laboratory test.

**COVID-like symptoms:** Temperature of 100.4 or higher, fever or chills, new cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting and/or diarrhea.

**School outbreak-associated case:** A confirmed case among students/staff should be classified as outbreak-associated. Family members or others outside the school who get sick should not be classified as a school outbreak-associated case.

**Isolation:** Staying home from work, school, and/or activities when a person has a confirmed case of COVID-19. Isolation lasts for at least 10 days after the onset of symptoms, 24 hours fever-free without fever reducing medication, and an improvement of symptoms. For people who have not had symptoms, isolation lasts 10 days from the day they had their first positive test. In some instances, as determined by an individual's medical provider, isolation may last in excess of days.

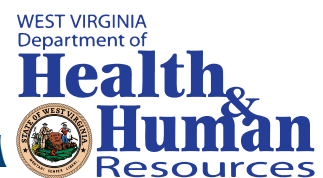
**Quarantine:** Staying home from work, school, and/or activities when a person is a close contact of someone with COVID-19. Quarantine lasts for 14 days (unless the person develops symptoms, then they will be put in isolation).

**Close contact:** A person who:

- » was within 6 feet of someone who has COVID-19 (even if they did not have symptoms) for at least 15 minutes total.
- » provided care for someone who is sick with COVID-19.
- » had direct physical contact with someone who is sick with COVID-19.
- » shared eating or drinking utensils with someone who is sick with COVID-19.
- » got respiratory droplets on them (through sneezing, coughing, shouting, etc.) from someone who is sick with COVID-19.
- » was in the same class/core group as a person with COVID-19.

**Core Grouping:** The practice of keeping the same individuals in the same group at all times during the school day. Changes in core groups are timed to align with school breaks. Core grouping helps limit the number of contacts each individual has. As a result, quarantines, dismissals, or suspension of in-person learning in the event of a student or staff member with COVID-19 affect fewer people. Students may be in multiple core groups (for example, bus ride to school, after-school sports, classroom).

**Confirmed outbreak:** Two or more confirmed COVID-19 cases among students/staff from separate households, with onset within 14 days in a single classroom or core group.



## BEST PRACTICES TO ADDRESS SYMPTOMS

- » Symptoms of COVID-19 include: new onset cough or shortness of breath by themselves OR at least 2 of the following: fever (100.4°F or higher), chills, muscle pain, sore throat, fatigue, congestion, loss of sense of smell or taste, or gastrointestinal symptoms of diarrhea, vomiting, or nausea.
- » If a person has a new symptom (for example, new loss of smell only) with no other diagnosis to explain it, they should stay home and talk to their health care provider about testing for COVID-19, even if it is the only symptom they are experiencing.
- » If a person is given an alternative diagnosis (e.g. strep throat, influenza, etc.) they should be stay home from school following the standard exclusion criteria for communicable diseases in schools.

## RESPONDING TO COVID-19 CASES AND OUTBREAKS IN SCHOOLS

Single cases	Response
<p><b>One student with confirmed COVID-19</b> within a school</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Student stays home until released from isolation (usually 10 days after symptom onset, 24 hours fever-free, and improving symptoms).</li> <li>» Class/core group stays home for a 14-day quarantine irrespective of test results.</li> <li>» If school is not practicing core grouping or there is some mixing of grouping, work with local health department to identify close contacts (including providing class schedules and class rosters), exclude contacts until released from quarantine.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Anticipate grade-wide or school-wide dismissal for several days while identification and notification of close contacts is ongoing.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>One teacher/staff member with confirmed COVID-19</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Staff member stays home until 10 days after onset of symptoms and 24 hours fever free with improved symptoms (10 days from test date for those who were asymptomatic).</li> <li>» Classroom/core group must quarantine for 14 days irrespective of test results.</li> <li>» All close contacts (students/staff) must quarantine for 14 days.</li> <li>» WVDHHR will determine when testing is appropriate for close contacts.</li> </ul>

<b>Confirmed outbreak</b>	
<p><b>Two</b> or more people from separate households with <b>confirmed COVID-19</b>, with onset within 14 days <b>in a single classroom or core group</b> (<i>classroom/core group outbreak</i>)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» All students and staff with COVID-19 stay home until released from isolation (usually 10 days after symptom onset, 24 hours fever free and improving symptoms).</li> <li>» Class/core group must quarantine for 14 days irrespective of test results.</li> <li>» WVDHHR recommends testing close contacts (about 5 days after exposure or earlier if contact develops symptoms).</li> <li>» If outbreak and exposures are limited to one classroom or core group, suspension of in-person instruction for the entire school should not be necessary.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Two</b> or more <b>outbreak classrooms</b>/core group (<i>school outbreak</i>)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» All students and staff with COVID-19 stay home until released from isolation (usually 10 days after symptom onset, 24 hours fever free and improving symptoms).</li> <li>» All classrooms/core groups, including staff, must quarantine for 14 days irrespective of test results.</li> <li>» WVDHHR recommends testing of close contacts (about 5 days after exposure or earlier if contact develops symptoms).</li> <li>» Consider suspension of in-person learning for the school, especially if evidence of transmission between classrooms/core groups within the school (as opposed to two distinct classroom outbreaks both starting with known household exposures). See information below on suspension of in-person learning for a school.</li> </ul>
<p>In schools not core grouping, two or more people, from separate households, with <b>confirmed COVID-19</b> with onset within 14 days in the <b>same school</b> (<i>school outbreak</i>)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» All students and staff with COVID-19 stay home until released from isolation (usually 10 days after symptom onset, 24 hours fever-free, and improving symptoms).</li> <li>» Work with local health departments to identify contacts. All contacts must quarantine for 14 days irrespective of test results.</li> <li>» WVDHHR recommends testing of close contacts (about 5 days after exposure or earlier if contact develops symptoms).</li> <li>» Consider suspension of in-person learning if teacher/ staff staying home interferes with the ability of the school to operate.</li> </ul>
<p>5% of students/staff have <b>confirmed COVID-19</b> within a 14-day period (<i>school outbreak</i>)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» All students and staff with COVID-19 stay home until released from isolation (usually 10 days after symptom onset, 24 hours fever free and improving symptoms).</li> <li>» Work with local health department to identify contacts. All contacts (students and staff) must quarantine for 14 days irrespective of test results.</li> <li>» WVDHHR will determine when testing is appropriate for close contacts</li> <li>» Recommend suspension of in-person learning for 14 days.</li> </ul>

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR SIBLINGS

The siblings of people with COVID-19 will likely be considered close contacts because they often live in the same house as the person who has COVID-19. They will stay home for a 14-day quarantine.

The siblings of people who are home for quarantine because they were exposed to COVID-19 do not need to stay home or be tested unless the sibling in quarantine develops symptoms or tests positive for COVID-19. Parents should closely monitor all of their children for symptoms.

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR COVID-19 TESTING IN SCHOOLS

It is important that people who are sick get tested for COVID-19. People who are not sick, but were a close contact of someone with COVID-19 should get tested for COVID-19 about five days after they were in contact with a sick person. Students and staff should work with their health care provider to get tested. Public health can help with testing if a person does not have a health care provider.

Testing everyone in a school (either before school starts or during school) is not recommended. Testing everyone has not been well-studied. Social distancing and wearing masks are more important ways to prevent COVID-19. A negative test means that the person did not have COVID-19 when they were tested. A negative test does not mean they are “safe” or “cleared” to be at school.

## CRITERIA FOR SUSPENDING IN-PERSON LEARNING

### Suspending In-Person Learning for a Classroom:

In-person learning for a single class/core group should be suspended when:

- » There is a student or staff member with confirmed case of COVID-19 because all members of the class/core group will be quarantined for 14 days. Length of suspension: 14 days.
- » There is a classroom/core group outbreak, because all members of the class/core group will be quarantined for 14 days. Length of suspension: 14 days.

### Suspending In-Person Learning for a School:

In-person learning for a school should be suspended when:

- » Five or more classroom/core group outbreaks (defined above) occur within a 14-day period. Length of suspension: 14 days.  
OR
- » 5% or more unrelated students/staff have confirmed COVID-19 within a 14-day period (minimum of 10 unrelated students/staff). Length of suspension: 14 days.

### District-wide Suspension of In-Person Learning:

In-person learning for an entire county should be suspended in accordance WV DHHR School Alert System, [wvde.us/reentrymetrics](http://wvde.us/reentrymetrics).

