

COVID-19 CLOSE CONTACT AND QUARANTINE INFORMATION

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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What is a school-associated case?

Per [MDHHS Emergency Order Under MCL 333.2253](#), a school-associated case is defined as a probable or confirmed COVID-19 case among students, teachers, school staff members, or any other person who was present on school property or at a school function under circumstances that may result in the transmission or contraction of COVID-19 during their infectious period.

What are the criteria used to determine a close contact?

Grand Traverse County Health Department considers a number of factors when determining the public health actions to take in response to school-associated COVID-19 cases. They published a [school toolkit](#) in August that describes these factors and considerations. Further, health departments rely on guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) when determining who is a close contact of a COVID-19 positive individual. These [CDC guidelines](#) have recently been revised. The CDC had previously defined a “close contact” as someone who spent at least 15 consecutive minutes within six feet of a confirmed coronavirus case. The latest guidance says a close contact is someone who was within six feet of an infected individual for a total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period.

Additionally, through case investigation and contact tracing, more specific information is elicited that helps inform the health department and schools about the duration of time a positive case was in the school during their infectious period, what kind of interaction they had with others, the type of environment the exposure took place in (indoor, outdoor, ventilation, room size, mingling in room, length of time the case spent in the room etc), and number of exposures (one time event, multiple repeated days/events). The process also helps identify other close contacts outside of the school environment and individuals who may have symptoms of COVID 19 from those in quarantine.

Do I have to follow the quarantine protocol?

Yes. The school has been provided the names of any students or staff members who have received instructions from the Health Department to quarantine. The school also receives notice of when those individuals have been cleared to return to school. Any student who has been instructed to quarantine will not be allowed to attend face-to-face instruction during their quarantine period. Instead, remote instruction will be provided. Any student who is sent to school while on quarantine will be sent home or remain in the school office and a parent/guardian will be called to pick up the student. Under the public health code, the Grand Traverse County Health Department has the legal authority to enforce quarantine protocols.

Do all members of the household need to quarantine?

No, the quarantine is only in effect for the student who is a close contact to the case. Everyone else in the household is a contact to a contact and does not need to quarantine. If the student in quarantine becomes symptomatic and tests positive, then household contacts would need to quarantine.

Can I shorten the length of time my student must remain out of school/activities if my student gets a COVID-19 test?

No. You cannot test yourself out of quarantine. If you are under quarantine, a negative test does not end the 14 day quarantine period early. You can both come down with symptoms AND infect others during the entire two week period. Quarantine times are disease specific based upon infectious periods of the disease and transmission period. You must stay quarantined for the entire 14 day possible infectious period.

If a student starts to have symptoms during quarantine what should we do?

Anyone with symptoms who is quarantined is encouraged to get tested for COVID 19. If in doubt, check with your child's primary care provider to be evaluated.

How does the school/school district work with the Health Department when determining a response to a school-associated COVID-19 positive case?

The school/school district provides information such as which students are enrolled in which class, who was present and when, where students were seated, for how long, etc. This information helps the Health Department determine potential close contacts. It is only one piece of the information collected, however. Once the Health Department begins to call potential close contacts, they learn additional details and information that helps create a clearer picture who may have been in contact with an individual while they were in their infectious period.

Why does the Old Mission Peninsula School's responses look different than other schools across the state?

Each individual circumstance is different. Comparing cases and corresponding responses is problematic because there are many pieces of information that may not be readily known or available to the public due to privacy laws, but are part of determining an appropriate public health response to mitigate the spread of the virus.

Although there is guidance from both CDC and the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services regarding considerations for schools, the information collected through the case investigation and contact tracing processes are the most informative pieces of the puzzle. That said, it is important to remember that the specific details collected through case investigations and contact tracing efforts are going to be unique and specific to each individual case. Further, much of that information is protected by HIPAA and FERPA laws. Although some students, parents or community members may believe they have all of the pieces of the puzzle necessary to determine the outcome in a particular case, there are many pieces of information that are necessary in order to see the entire picture. The decision to quarantine an individual, a classroom or even an entire school is made to contain transmission and is not taken lightly. Each circumstance is reviewed thoroughly before a decision is made and oftentimes, scenarios may be very complex.

How are quarantine dates determined?

Quarantine is determined by the last date of close contact to the confirmed positive COVID-19 case. Often information at the beginning of a case investigation is limited and as the investigation unfolds there can be corrections to quarantine dates. If there is a change in the length of quarantine you will be notified by the health department of the change and reason for the change. In addition, an individual in quarantine starts showing symptoms of COVID-19, their quarantine may be extended until COVID-19 is ruled out.