

# Action When Someone Gets Sick

**In-Person Learning Resources for Parents and Caregivers at Chicago Public Schools** — A Resource Created by Healthy Schools Campaign for Parents and Caregivers in Chicago Public Schools

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**HEALTHY SCHOOLS  
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# Action When Someone Gets Sick

With community spread still relatively high throughout Chicago and the rest of the United States, someone at your student's school may get sick with COVID-19. When that happens, your school must follow a clear plan that includes contact tracing, rapid communication and quarantining that is conducted in partnership with the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH).

## ***What Experts Say***

School districts must have clear plans in the event that a student, teacher, or staff member becomes infected. Recommendations for actions when someone at a school gets sick include:

- A contact tracing protocol may be developed in partnership with or by the local board of health. A rapid communication plan to inform parents, caregivers, teachers, and staff members of infections in the school is needed.
- A testing protocol may also be developed to refer individuals to testing centers.
- Schools should have clear guidance indicating when students and staff should quarantine and when they are allowed to return to school. While the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has indicated that 10 days is allowable in certain circumstances, state and local health departments are still encouraging a full 14 days.
- Schools must frequently update their plans as the number of cases and hospitalizations changes in the surrounding community and be prepared to close if necessary.
- Schools should have a point-person or team to lead the COVID-19 response. This person should have a plan that ensures that information is quickly and accurately shared to school administration, teachers, parents, caregivers, students, and community members.
- Schools should provide frequent communication regarding school policies through a variety of media.

## ***What CPS Says***

CPS policy states that anyone who is experiencing symptoms must not come to school. Any school staff member, teacher or student who is sick should not return to school until they meet the following requirements, whether or not they were tested for COVID-19:

- at least 10 days have passed since COVID-19 symptoms first appeared; and,
- at least one day (24 hours) has passed since fever has resolved (no fever without the use of fever reducing medications) and all other symptoms are improving.

If there is a positive case, staff and the families of students who have been identified as close contacts will be notified that they must quarantine for 14 days from the initial testing date before returning to school, even if they have a negative test and are free of symptoms.

CPS has hired dedicated staff to support contact tracing and will work in coordination with CDPH to ensure that those identified as close contacts have rapid contact tracing and are connected to city resources such as monitoring and testing. Those who had direct contact with someone with COVID-19 (were within six feet of the person with COVID-19 for 15 consecutive minutes or more) should quarantine at home and monitor their symptoms for 14 calendar days from the last time they were in direct contact with the ill person. Individuals who did not have direct contact with the person who is sick (were six feet apart from the individual with COVID-19 and spent less than 15 consecutive minutes with them) can return to the building immediately after disinfection of the relevant space. CPS will help students gain access to a free COVID-19 test.

The district is offering a [voluntary COVID-19 surveillance testing program](#) for school-based staff. The stated aim of their surveillance testing program is to measure and monitor the prevalence of COVID-19 among asymptomatic staff in its schools. On a weekly basis, 25 percent of staff will be tested, and all staff should expect to be tested at least once per month. Principals will receive a roster of staff who will be tested each week.

While the CPS website provides aggregate data on the number of COVID cases by schools by week, the information per individual school only shows information about the number of cases per quarter.

### ***Parents and Caregivers Should Know***

CPS will work with the Chicago Department of Public Health to [help reduce the spread of COVID-19 in school buildings](#). As a parent, you may still want to know more about the contact tracing process. This may include questions such as:

- How will quarantining times be enforced?
- Will the whole school be notified about a COVID-19 case in real time or only the pod that is being impacted? Will the data about COVID-19 cases that are being tracked and reported to the district on a weekly basis be shared in weekly totals with the school community?
- How will my student continue to learn if they need to quarantine due to contact tracing concerns?
- Will absentee policies be adapted to reflect the need to quarantine?
- Who will teach my student's class if the teacher needs to be quarantined for up to 14 days? How is staffing of substitute teachers being handled, and how is their contact with other student pods being reduced?
- What if my student's bus driver gets sick?
- How will quarantining be handled if the positive test comes from a teacher that rotates between pods?

*The best practices in this document are based on guidelines provided by the Harvard [T.H. Chan School of Public Health](#) and the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).*