

Chelmsford Public Schools

COVID-19 Health and Safety Protocols

Updated 5/8/23

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) updated COVID-19 Isolation and Exposure Guidance for districts for the 2022-2023 school year. DESE and MDPH issued a joint memo advising districts and schools to focus their COVID mitigation strategies towards vulnerable and symptomatic individuals, while minimizing the need for more restrictive districtwide COVID policies.

The Commonwealth is not recommending universal mask requirements, surveillance testing of asymptomatic individuals (Pooled Testing), contact tracing, or Test-to-Stay Protocols in schools. There is no statewide masking mandate in schools, apart from in School Health Offices and there is no testing requirement for schools. As always, any individual who wishes to continue to mask, including those who face higher risk from COVID-19, should be supported in that choice.

All medical decisions will be made in conjunction with the Chelmsford Health Department, the CPS School Physician, and the CPS Coordinator of Nursing Services. Decisions will be based on the status of the COVID-19 pandemic locally and any updated DESE guidance or statewide protocol change. Please note the following guidelines for current best practices are subject to change as additional information pertaining to COVID-19 becomes available.

Coronaviruses are respiratory viruses and are generally spread through respiratory secretions (droplets from coughs and sneezes) of an infected person to another person. Given the nature of the pandemic, we know it is impossible to completely eradicate the risks associated with COVID-19. In Massachusetts, however, we have seen evidence that risk can be mitigated by receiving the vaccination for COVID 19 (by those individuals who are eligible), and engaging in good respiratory hygiene, proper handwashing, avoiding touching our eyes, nose, mouth or face, by staying home when sick and, most importantly, following the isolation requirements when testing positive for COVID-19. We expect that all students and staff will incorporate these healthy practices, making them a part of their daily routine in the 2022-2023 school year. DESE, MDPH and Chelmsford Public Schools continue to strongly recommend that all staff and eligible students receive the COVID-19 vaccine and, if eligible, the booster. Information about vaccination clinics is available online at [VaxFinder](#).

For an additional list of available vaccine sites please click on this link:

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-vaccination-locations>

In addition to recommending the COVID-19 vaccine, it continues to be essential that as many children and adults as possible receive flu vaccines. This will reduce the number of students and staff who need to stay home due to illness.

Effective August 15, 2022, per DESE and MDPH recommendations, districts K-12 should follow the below guidance:

- A rapid antigen test, such as a self test, is preferred to a PCR test in most situations.
- To count days for isolation, Day 0 is the first day of symptoms **OR** the day the positive test was taken, whichever is earlier.
- Contact tracing is no longer recommended or required, but schools or programs must continue to work with the Local Board of Health in the case of outbreaks.
- The Commonwealth is not recommending universal mask requirements, surveillance testing of asymptomatic individuals, contact tracing, or test-to-stay testing in schools. While masks are not required or recommended in these settings except for in school health offices when ill, any individual who wishes to continue to mask, including those who face higher risk from COVID-19, should be supported in that choice. For those who need or choose to mask, masking is never required in these settings while the individual is eating, drinking, or outside.
- All individuals are encouraged to stay up-to-date with vaccination as vaccines remain the best way to help protect yourself and others.

On May 2, 2023, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health announced the federal and state public health emergencies will end on May 11, 2023. Facemasks will no longer be routinely required in school health offices. Isolation and exposure guidance for COVID-19 will not change and are outlined below. School health staff should continue to use appropriate PPE for management of known or suspected cases of COVID-19. School health personnel will continue to reference the updated “Comprehensive Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)” guidance.

Isolation and exposure guidance and protocols

- Quarantine is no longer required nor recommended for children or staff in these settings, regardless of vaccination status or where the exposure occurred. All exposed individuals may continue to attend programming as long as they remain asymptomatic. A high quality mask should be worn for 10 days, and test 5 days after the exposure on Day 6. If symptoms develop, follow the guidance for symptomatic individuals, below.
- Children and staff who test positive must isolate for at least 5 days. If they are asymptomatic or symptoms are resolving and they have been fever free without the use of fever-reducing medicine for 24 hours, they may return to programming after Day 5 and should wear a high-quality mask through Day 10:
 - If the individual is able to mask, they must do so through Day 10.
 - If the child has a negative test on Day 5 or later, they do not need to mask (please provide documentation for the negative test to the school nurse).

- If the individual is unable to mask, they may return to programming with a negative test on Day 5 or later.
 - Please notify your school nurse of a positive COVID-19 test result.
- Symptomatic individuals should be sent home and allowed to return to their program or school if symptoms remain mild and they test negative, or they have been fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication and their symptoms are resolving, or if a medical professional makes an alternative diagnosis. A negative test is strongly recommended for return. Best practice would also include wearing a mask, if possible, until symptoms are fully resolved. For symptomatic individuals, MDPH recommends a second test within 48 hours if the initial test is negative.

Below is the full list of symptoms for which caregivers should monitor their children, and staff should monitor themselves.

COVID-19 Symptoms List:

- Fever (100.0° Fahrenheit or higher), chills, or shaking chills
- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- New loss of taste or smell
- Muscle aches or body aches
- Cough (not due to other known cause, such as chronic cough)
- Sore throat, *when in combination with other symptoms*
- Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea *when in combination with other symptoms*
- Headache *when in combination with other symptoms*
- Fatigue, *when in combination with other symptoms*
- Nasal congestion or runny nose (not due to other known causes, such as allergies) *when in combination with other symptoms*

The single most important thing to do if any of the symptoms or a combination of symptoms are present is to **STAY HOME**. Our collective health relies, in part, on individual attention and responsibility. Note that some symptoms of COVID-19 are the same as the flu or a bad cold; please do not assume it is another condition. **When in doubt, please stay home. Also, please remain home if awaiting results of a COVID-19 test and inform the school nurse of a positive test result.**

Notify Health Officials

- In accordance with state and local laws and regulations, school nurses/administrators should notify the Chelmsford Health Department of any case of COVID-19 while maintaining confidentiality in accordance with the [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#).

- CPS Nursing Staff will work collaboratively with the Chelmsford Health Department to identify individuals who test positive for COVID-19. Individuals and families will be instructed to follow isolation and exposure guidance protocols, and [self-monitor for symptoms](#), following [CDC guidance](#) if symptoms develop.
- The CPS Coordinator of Nursing Services will work closely with CPS administrators to identify any COVID-19 cases and coordinate necessary actions.

Additional requirements:

- Families need to provide the school nurse with at least four (4) emergency contacts, indicating individuals who will be able to come to the school and pick up their child if they become ill during the school day. Dismissing sick children (and staff) in a timely fashion (within 30 minutes) is imperative for the safety of all.
- Families are asked to follow the Massachusetts travel guidelines which can be found at <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-travel-order#international-travel->
- Students who are not wearing a mask and are showing signs of illness, will be asked to wear a mask to reduce the spread of the illness until they leave the school premises.
- As recommended by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), the Department of Public Health (DPH), the Chelmsford Health Department, our protocols were created to ensure the safest return to school possible. Learn more about illness care for a student or staff member during the school day: [Illness Management](#)

COVID-19 Test sites in the area:

AFC Urgent Care	44 Drumhill Road	Chelmsford	978-528-3033
Harvard Vanguard	228 Billerica Road	Chelmsford	617-629-6000
Lowell Community Health Center	161 Jackson Street	Lowell	978-937-9700
Circle Health	198 Littleton Road	Westford	978-323-0302
Circle Health	1574 Main Street	Tewksbury	978-323-5950

Additional testing sites in MA: <https://www.mass.gov/covid-19-testing>

Lawrence General Hospital offers asymptomatic testing for ALL Massachusetts residents at no cost. [Click here Lawrence COVID-19 Community Testing Center](#)

A [list of test sites is available here](#), and Massachusetts also has an [interactive testing map](#). Staff and students who have symptoms should also contact their primary care provider for further instructions.

For a list of available Vaccine Sites please click on the links below:

[COVID-19 vaccination locations](#)

[COVID-19 Vaccine](#)

[Protocol: Presence of significant number of new cases in a municipality](#)

In the case of a significant outbreak specific to Chelmsford, as determined by the local Health Department or MDPH, the superintendent and school leaders will consult with the Chelmsford Health Department to determine whether it is appropriate to close a specific school, schools, or the entire district.

Districts and schools can contact the DESE Rapid Response Help Center at 781-338-3500 for guidance if they are experiencing a high volume of cases. Notification should also be provided to local boards of health and district leadership.