



Department of Public Health



MAYOR
Oscar Leeser

LOCAL HEALTH AUTHORITY COVID-19 UPDATED RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCHOOLS K-12 (ACADEMIC YEAR 2022-2023) **UPDATED JULY 22, 2022**

CITY COUNCIL

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Peter Svarzbein

District 2
Alexandra Anello

District 3
Cassandra Hernandez

District 4
Joe Molinar

District 5
Isabel Salcido

District 6
Claudia L. Rodriguez

District 7
Henry Rivera

District 8
Cissy Lizarraga

CITY MANAGER
Tommy Gonzalez

Recommendations for area schools K-12 will continue to evolve as we move through the COVID-19 pandemic. These recommendations are based on careful analysis of the most current local data. Its focus is protecting the health and well-being of students, teachers, and school staff in general.

Vaccination:

Vaccination against COVID-19 continues to be strongly recommended for all eligible individuals as the foundation and most effective of all public health preventive measures. All individuals are strongly recommended to be up to date with COVID-19 vaccination. Being up to date at this present time requires the completion of the primary series of vaccines along with all applicable booster doses if eligible.

Isolation and Quarantine:

Prompt identification of COVID-19 cases within schools is vital to prevent school outbreaks and preserve school operations. It is recommended to identify students, teachers and other staff who are symptomatic, to properly separate them from the rest of the class or coworkers and refer them for evaluation.

Schools are required to follow current Isolation protocols which applies to individuals who have symptoms and test positive for COVID-19, regardless of vaccination status. They should isolate for a minimum of 5 days and may end isolation if:

- At least 1 day (24 hours) has passed WITHOUT fever and the use of fever-reducing medications; **AND**
- Has shown improvement in symptoms.

Individuals who are sick with COVID-19 and continue to have fever or other symptoms without improvement after 5 days of isolation will need to continue in isolation until they meet the above criteria.

Hector I. Ocaranza, MD, - Interim Director/Health Authority
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Individuals who have NO symptoms but test positive for COVID-19 and have not been sick with COVID-19 within the last 90 days, should isolate for a minimum of 5-days from the date of the first positive specimen collected.

Quarantine is still recommended for 5 days for those who are unvaccinated and have not been sick with COVID-19 within the last 90 days; however, schools can keep exposed students within their classrooms if they are not exhibiting any symptoms. A strategy called cohorting is acceptable. It is applicable to congregate settings where immunizations rates are high.

Masking:

The use of a well-fitting mask consistently and correctly is another infection control layer that reduces the risk of spreading the virus that causes COVID-19. The use of face masks while indoors is recommended when the community risk level is High for those who want to continue wearing a mask. Anyone who chooses to wear a mask, regardless of current community level, should be supported in their decision.

The use of a well-fitting mask is also strongly recommended for the following 5 days after someone is released from Isolation from the COVID-19 disease.

Distancing:

Social Distancing is another layer within the prevention strategy that has become secondary and very difficult to follow due to inherent constraints of physical spaces within schools. When vaccination rates are high within the community, social distancing becomes less relevant and, in many instances, might not be applicable.

Reporting:

It is required for school districts to report to DPH the number of positive COVID-19 cases and absenteeism on a weekly basis. This will allow DPH to properly assess the COVID-19 situation within schools and to determine proper next steps should an outbreak be identified within a specific school.

Reporting procedures will be explained in detail to designated district nurse points of contact. Any unusual disease pattern or clusters can also be reported to epireporting@elpasotexas.gov.

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Cleaning and Disinfection:

Promote ventilation of classrooms and other indoor school areas. Continue with currently approved district policies and procedures regarding cleaning and disinfecting. Consider enhanced cleaning and disinfection of classrooms if COVID-19 cases have been reported.

Currently it is not recommended to block outdoor play areas or any other area due to a positive COVID-19 individual. Please follow your current policies and procedures regarding cleaning and disinfection.

Testing:

It is imperative that all symptomatic individuals be tested whether at school through a diagnostic testing program, any community testing program, or an FDA-approved at-home test

Schools may continue conducting screening and/or diagnostic testing should districts have available resources for a testing program at school. Testing performed at schools should be reported to DPH weekly to include the amount of testing performed and all positive results.

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