



Updates for K-12 Schools: Isolation/Quarantine Timeframes and Recommendations for Very High COVID-19 Activity Levels

Date: December 30, 2021

Public Health Message Type: Alert Advisory Update Information

Intended Audience: All public health partners Healthcare providers Infection preventionists
 Local health departments Schools ACOs
 Animal health professionals Other:

Key Points:

Very High COVID-19 Activity Levels

- N.J. is reporting record-high COVID-19 cases and test positivity rates. Emergency department visits and hospitalizations for COVID-like illness are also increasing.
- As of the week ending December 25, 2021 (MMWR week 51), three N.J. Regions (Northwest, Northeast and Central East) have very high (red) [COVID-19 Activity Levels \(CALI\)](#).
- NJDOH's current guidance for K-12 schools may be found at: [NJDOH COVID-19 Public Health Recommendations for Local Health Departments for K-12 Schools](#). While that current guidance is still largely applicable, it does not provide information as to what additional steps schools should take when CALI score reaches a very high level. This document provides that additional guidance.

Updated Isolation & Quarantine Timeframes

- On December 27, 2021, CDC issued a press release titled [Recommended Isolation and Quarantine Period for General Population](#) shortening the recommended time for isolation and quarantine for the general public.
- CDC is currently updating guidance documents for specific settings, including schools, to consider how updated isolation and quarantine timeframes should be applied in these settings. NJDOH will review and/or update N.J. guidance for schools once the CDC guidance is released.

Actions:

Very High COVID-19 Activity Levels (red)

- NJDOH recommends that in addition to following current [NJDOH guidance](#), K-12 schools located in regions with very high COVID-19 CALI activity levels (bolded recommendations are new) should:
 - Continue to adhere to mask mandates as outlined in [EO 251](#).
 - Conduct routine COVID-19 screening testing of all unvaccinated students and staff according to [Public Health Recommendations for Implementing COVID-19 Screening Testing in K-12 Schools](#).
 - Continue to promote layered prevention strategies such as physical distancing, screening testing, handwashing, cleaning, improved ventilation, staying home when sick, etc.
 - **Limit participation in extracurricular activities to those students and staff with up-to-date COVID-19 vaccination per [Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices \(ACIP\) recommendations](#)¹.**
 - **Conduct COVID-19 screening testing of students and staff, regardless of vaccination status, twice weekly for participation in all extracurricular activities.**

Updated Isolation & Quarantine Timeframes

- CDC has not yet applied the recently revised isolation and quarantine timeframes for the general population to K-12 schools. Therefore, until CDC updates school specific guidance, it is recommended that K-12 schools continue to follow conventional isolation and quarantine timeframes (10-day isolation/exclusion; 7 or 10-day quarantine/exclusion with and without negative testing). Watch for future updates as guidance may change in the near future.

Contact Information:

- The Communicable Disease Service at (609) 826-5964 during business hours.

References and Resources:

- CDC's [Recommended Isolation and Quarantine Period for General Population](#)
- NJDOH [COVID-19: Information for Schools](#)
- NJDOH [COVID-19 Public Health Recommendations for Local Health Departments for K-12 Schools](#)

¹ Students and staff who have received one COVID-19 vaccine dose can continue to participate in extracurricular activities until such time as subsequent doses are recommended by ACIP.