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Governor Cuomo Releases Guidelines on Testing Protocol for Schools to Reopen in Red or Orange Micro-Cluster Zones

Requires Mass Testing Before School Reopens Followed by Weekly Surveillance Testing with Results Reported to The NYS COVID-19 Report Card

New York State Will Provide Rapid Test Kits for Schools Wishing to Participate

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today released guidelines for schools to reopen in red and orange micro-cluster zones in order to help keep schools in focus areas open to in-person instruction. The guidelines require mass testing in schools before they reopen followed by vigilant symptom and exposure screening conducted daily. Impacted schools can reopen as early as Monday however students and faculty must be able to provide a negative COVID-19 test result prior to going back to the classroom. New York State will provide rapid test kits for schools wishing to participate.

"In the micro-cluster zones, we've been working with schools in the red and the orange zones. The schools, private schools, Catholic schools, yeshivas, want to be open in the red and orange zones, and we've been working with them to try to find ways to keep people safe but allow children to go to school," **Governor Cuomo** said. "We have agreed with them on a protocol that keeps people safe and allows children to be educated."

In order for a school to reopen in a red or orange micro-cluster zones, schools must:

- Remain closed for at least 4 calendar days after the zone designation is announced (48 hours to ensure lack of infectious contact in the school, and additional time for testing), and may re-open as early as the 5th calendar day.
- Ensure that no person may attend in-person on the campus without first receiving a negative test result, this applies to faculty/staff as well as students.

Schools may reopen after these steps are taken, with students and faculty/staff who are positive or close contacts of positive cases appropriately excluded from school grounds. Additionally, the test result must be no more 7 days past the date of specimen collection on the day in-person learning reopens and date of specimen collection must be after date the zone was established.

After a school reopens in a red or orange micro-cluster zone, vigilant symptom and exposure screening must be conducted daily and must follow the below guidelines:

- 25% of the in-person learning school community (both students and faculty/staff) must be tested per week.
- The school should ensure that it provides opportunities to test on school grounds, or otherwise facilitates testing and accepts test results from healthcare providers.
- If the school does not hold a testing event or provide testing on school grounds, test results provided to the school as part of the 25% testing of the population must be received within 7 days from the date of specimen collection and specimen collection must be after the school reopens.
- Each week the 25% of the school population tested must be composed of unique individuals who have not previously been tested for the surveillance screening, as part of the weekly 25% testing until the fifth week of weekly testing at which point the individuals who participated in the first week of testing should be tested again.
- Members of the school community who test positive must isolate according to established guidelines.
- Contact tracing must be performed to ensure that contacts to newly identified positive individuals are quarantined according to established guidelines.

New York State will provide schools with rapid test kits if requested. The schools must provide certified personnel (with necessary laboratory permits) to do the tests, and all results must be entered into ECLRS and reported on the school survey to the NYS COVID-19 Report Card.

Schools that cannot meet the reopening requirements must remain in remote learning for the duration of the zone designation. If the 25% of the school population random sampling

generates a minimum of 9 cases, or if for a sample size of more than 300 weekly tests, achieves a positivity rate of 2% (6 cases or more depending on size) in New York City, or 3% (9 or more cases) outside of the city, then the school will be required to close. Reopened schools that fail to comply with these requirements could be subject to Section 16 orders, or other fines and penalties.

Contact the Governor's Press Office



**Contact us
by phone:**

Albany: (518) 474 - 8418

New York City: (212) 681 - 4640



**Contact us
by email:**

Press.Office@exec.ny.gov