

Erie County Department of Health

Guidance for P-12 and Higher Education when a student/staff has COVID-19 symptoms or a positive COVID-19 test

What to do when a student/staff develops COVID-19 symptoms.

If the student/staff is at school when symptoms begin, the student/staff should immediately be sent home or to their school residence. The student/staff should be placed in isolation at home or at their school residence in their own room with their own bathroom.

One of the three following criteria must be met before the student/staff can return to school:

1. A note from the student/staff's medical care provider with an alternative diagnosis is provided OR
2. The result of a negative diagnostic COVID-19 test is provided OR
3. There have been at least ten days since the onset of COVID-19 symptoms.

The symptomatic student/staff who is not tested for COVID-19 should be treated like a COVID-19 case for isolation and the quarantine of household members. If the student/guardian or staff member chooses isolation for ten days from the onset of COVID-19 symptoms, they must remain in isolation separate from household members. Household members of the isolated student/staff must self-quarantine until 14 days from the last day of exposure and remain symptom free.

What to do when a student/staff tests positive for COVID-19.

The student/staff should be placed in isolation in their own room with their own bathroom. All the following criteria must be met before the student/staff can return to school:

1. At least ten days after COVID-19 symptom onset or ten days from their first positive test if asymptomatic AND
2. Fever-free for at least 72 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication AND
3. Respiratory symptoms are improving.

What to do with classmates or staff members in contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case.

It is important to understand that protective measures such as maintaining 6 feet of social distance and masking while in the classroom are practices aimed at **reducing the risk of infection**. However, having these practices in place does **not** mean that a classroom is exempt from quarantine in the event of a positive COVID-19 case. Duration of exposure impacts risk. Even with protective practices, the following quarantine rules apply:

1. Any student/staff exposed to a COVID-19 case in a standard classroom setting or in other enclosed common school settings, such as a breakroom or office, for **60 minutes or more** will be instructed to quarantine in their own room with their own bathroom for 14 days from the last day of exposure to the COVID-19 case.
2. Any student/staff exposed to a COVID-19 case in a large classroom setting (e.g., lecture halls with more than 50 students present) for **60 minutes or more**, and within a space consisting of **two seated rows** behind, in front of, and to both sides of the case, will be instructed to quarantine in their own room with their own bathroom for 14 days from the last day of exposure to the COVID-19 case. If seats are not assigned and individual proximity to the case cannot be determined, the entire classroom will be instructed to quarantine in their own room with their own bathroom for 14 days from the last day of exposure to the COVID-19 case.
3. If the exposure time was **less than 60 minutes**, no quarantine instruction will be given, **so long as** 6 feet of social distancing was in place. However, those in the class should monitor for symptoms.
4. Persons under quarantine who develop symptoms should be tested for COVID-19. If the test result is positive, the student/staff will be placed in isolation. If test result is negative, the student/staff will continue in quarantine for the full 14 days.

Questions regarding this guidance can be direct to the Erie County Department of Health, Office of Epidemiology and Disease Surveillance, School Program at (716) 858-7697 during normal business hours.