

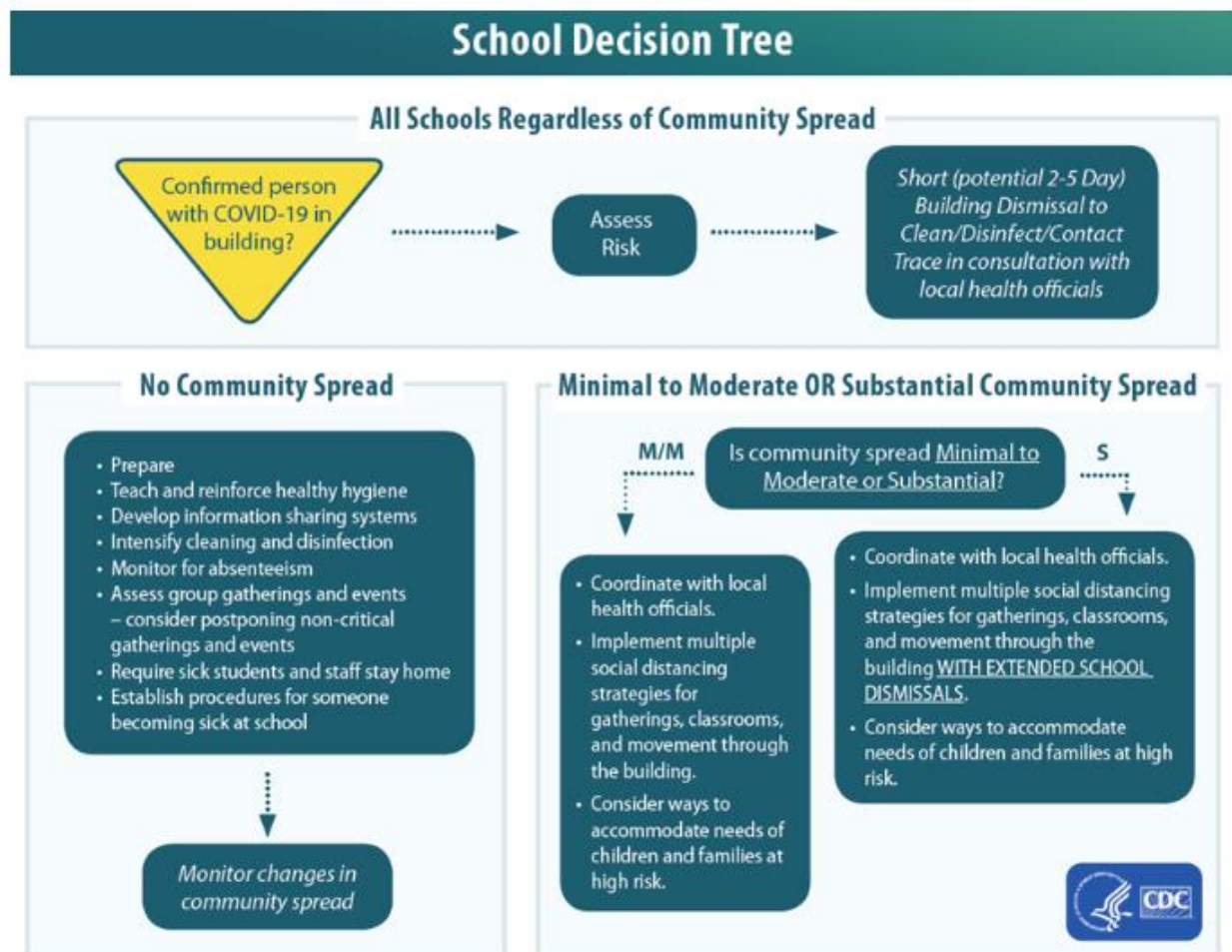
COVID-19 Guidance for Schools

This guidance uses the most up-to-date information available from the CDC and emerging best practices, thus subject to change.

Schools, working together with local public health districts, have an important role in slowing the spread of diseases to help ensure students have safe and healthy learning environments. Schools serve students, staff, and visitors from throughout the community. All of these people may have close contact in the school setting, often sharing spaces, equipment, and supplies.

Guidance for schools is organized into five sections:

- Confirmed Case in School, Regardless of Community Transmission
- Category 1: No community transmission (preparedness phase)
- Category 2: When there is minimal to moderate community transmission
- Category 3: When there is substantial community transmission
- Communication and Guidance for School Staff and Parents



Confirmed Case in School, Regardless of Community Transmission

Any school in any community may need to implement short-term closure procedures regardless of community spread if an infected person has been in a school building. The CDC recommends the following procedures:

- **First experience: Coordinate with your local public health department.**
 - Contact your local public health agency and we will work with administrators to determine a course of action
- **Dismiss students and most staff for 2-5 days.**
 - Initial short-term dismissal allows time for the local health officials to gain a better understanding of the COVID-19 situation impacting the school. This allows the local health officials to help the school determine appropriate next steps, including whether an extended dismissal duration is needed to stop or slow further spread of COVID-19.
 - Local health officials' recommendations for the scope (e.g., a single school, multiple schools, the full district) and duration of school dismissals will be made on a case-by-case basis using the most up-to-date information about COVID-19.
 - During school dismissals, also cancel extracurricular group activities, school-based afterschool programs, and large events (e.g., assemblies, field trips, and sporting events).
 - Encourage and practice social distancing measures.
- **Communicate with staff, parents, and students regarding dismissal decisions and possible COVID-19 exposure.**
 - Include messages to counter potential stigma and discrimination
 - Maintain confidentiality
 - Outline intended response efforts
- **Clean and disinfect thoroughly.**
 - Close off areas used by the individual with COVID-19 and wait as long as possible, up to 24 hours, before beginning cleaning and disinfecting. Open doors and windows if possible.
 - Clean all other areas, especially highly touched surfaces, such as doorknobs, lights, desks, phones, keyboards, faucets, sinks. Resource: [Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility](#)
- **Determine whether an extended school dismissal is needed after cleaning and disinfecting.**
 - Work with local health officials on whether staying open for staff while students stay home is advised, or re-instate telecommuting or other alternative work opportunities.
 - Administrators are not expected to make extended school dismissal decisions or determine when students and staff should return to schools on their own and should work in close collaboration and coordination with local health officials.
 - Students and staff who are well but are taking care of or share a home with someone with a case of COVID-19 should follow instructions from local health officials to determine when to return to school.
- **Reinstate strategies to continue education and related supports to students as needed**

Category 1 No Community Spread

Evidence of isolated cases or limited community transmission, case investigations underway, no evidence of exposure in large communal setting, e.g., healthcare facility, school, mass gathering.

Review, update, and implement emergency operations plan and reinforce healthy hygiene practices.

- Include strategies (Non-pharmaceutical interventions, or NPI) to reduce the spread of a wide variety of infectious diseases, including social distancing and school dismissals that can be used to stop the spread.
- Emphasize everyday preventive actions for students and staff
 - [CDC Staying Home When Sick Flyer](#) / [What To Do If You're Sick](#)
 - [Spanish Version](#)
 - [CDC Avoid Spreading Germs At Work Flyer](#) / [Stop the Spread of Germs](#)
 - [Spanish Version](#) / [Spanish Version](#)
 - [CDC Handwashing Posters for Children and Teens](#)
 - [CDC Cover Your Cough Flyer](#)
 - [Spanish Version](#)

Intensify cleaning and disinfection efforts

- Enhance cleaning of high touch surfaces like door knobs, toilet handles, light switches, classroom and bathroom sink handles, countertops.
- Ensure that hand sanitizer, soap/paper towels and tissues are widely available in school facilities.

Monitor and plan for absenteeism

- Day-to-day reporting (absenteeism) and review for patterns for large increases.
- Encourage students and staff to stay home when sick, even without documentation from doctors. Use flexibility, when possible, to allow staff to stay home to care for sick family members, especially for those with common cold and flu symptoms, which are similar to COVID-19.

Assess group gatherings and events

- Review any planned events (e.g. assemblies, field days, athletic events) and determine if social distancing strategies can be put place. If not, consider cancelling or rescheduling.

Create and test communication plans for use within the school community.

- Strategies for communicating with staff, students, and their families, including sharing steps being taken to prepare, how information will be shared in the future.

Require sick students and staff to stay home. Establish procedures for students and staff sick at school.

- Sick staff and students should be sent home as soon as possible, and keep them separate and isolated from well students and staff until they can leave.
- **Schools are not expected to screen students or staff to identify cases of COVID-19.** If a school has cases of COVID-19, local health officials will help identify those individuals and will follow up on next steps. Resource: Flyer - [Steps to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 if you are sick](#) / [Spanish Version](#)

Plan for when community spread occurs (non-pharmaceutical interventions or NPIs)

- [Personal NPIs](#) (e.g. stay home when sick, cover coughs, wash hands, etc.)
- [Community NPIs](#) (e.g. social distancing)
- [Environmental NPIs](#) (e.g. routine cleaning practices)

Category 2 Minimal to Moderate Community Transmission

Widespread and/or sustained transmission with high likelihood or confirmed exposure within communal settings, with potential for rapid increase in suspected cases.

If local health officials report there are multiple cases of COVID-19 in the community, schools may need to implement additional strategies in response to prevent spread in the school, but they should continue using the strategies they implemented when there was no community transmission. These additional strategies include:

Coordinate with local health officials.

- This should be a first step in making decisions about responses to the presence of COVID-19 in the community. Health officials can help a school determine which set of strategies might be most appropriate for their specific community's situation.

Implement multiple social distancing strategies. Select strategies based on feasibility given the unique space and needs of the school:

- **Cancel field trips, assemblies, and other large gatherings.**
- **Cancel or modify classes where students are likely to be in very close contact.** In physical education or other close contact classes, consider having teachers come to classrooms to prevent classes mixing with others in the gymnasium or music room.
- **Increase the space between desks.** Rearrange student desks to maximize the space between students. Turn desks to face in the same direction (rather than facing each other) to reduce transmission caused from virus-containing droplets (e.g., from talking, coughing, sneezing).
- **Avoid mixing students in common areas.**
 - Allow students to eat lunch and breakfast in their classrooms or stagger lunch.
 - Stagger recess times and/or separate recess areas by class.
 - Send a few students into the library to pick out books rather than going as a class.
 - Restrict hallway use through homeroom stays or staggered release of classes.
 - Try to avoid taking multiple classes to bathrooms at once (e.g., avoid having all classes use the bathroom right after lunch or recess).
- **Stagger arrival and/or dismissal times.** These approaches can limit the amount of close contact between students in high-traffic situations and times.
- **Reduce congestion in the health office.** Use the health office for children with flu-like symptoms and a satellite location for first aid or medication distribution.
- **Limit nonessential visitors.** Limit the presence of volunteers for classroom activities, mystery readers, cafeteria support, and other activities.
- **Limit cross-school transfer for special programs.** If students are brought from multiple schools for special programs (e.g., music, robotics, academic clubs), consider using distance learning to deliver the instruction or temporarily offering duplicate programs in the participating schools.
- **Teach staff, students, and their families to maintain distance from each other in the school.** Educate staff, students, and their families at the same time and explain why this is important.
- **Consider alternative class size and structure.**
 - Create hybrid classrooms where students can attend virtually and in-person, reducing social contacts
 - Hold physical education and music classes outside and encourage students to spread out
 - Turn desks to face same direction and space at least 6 feet apart
 - Stagger days or instructional blocks of time (morning/afternoon)

- **Encourage cloth face coverings when practical while at school.**
 - Staff and students (and visitors and volunteers, if permitted) should be encouraged to wear cloth face coverings
 - Personal masks can be worn, or school can provide for those who do not have one but wish to wear one
- **Communicate with local public health districts to determine if screening employees and students daily for COVID-19 symptoms upon entry to the facility, including check for low-grade fever with no-touch thermometer**

Consider ways to accommodate the needs of children and families at [risk](#) for serious illness from COVID-19.

- Honor requests of parents who may have concerns about their children attending school due to underlying medical conditions of those in their home.
- Staff who cannot be at school due to their own high-risk conditions can provide distance learning instruction to those students who are also unable to attend.
- The CDC lists underlying medical conditions that may increase the risk of serious COVID19 for people of any age:
 - **Blood disorders** (e.g., sickle cell disease or on blood thinners)
 - **Chronic kidney disease as defined by your doctor.** Patient has been told to avoid or reduce the dose of medications because kidney disease, or is under treatment for kidney disease, including receiving dialysis
 - **Chronic liver disease** as defined by your doctor. (e.g., cirrhosis, chronic hepatitis) Patient has been told to avoid or reduce the dose of medications because liver disease or is under treatment for liver disease.
 - **Compromised immune system** (immunosuppression) (e.g., seeing a doctor for cancer and treatment such as chemotherapy or radiation, received an organ or bone marrow transplant, taking high doses of corticosteroids or other immunosuppressant medications, HIV or AIDS) • Current or recent pregnancy in the last two weeks
 - **Endocrine disorders** (e.g., diabetes mellitus)
 - **Metabolic disorders** (such as inherited metabolic disorders and mitochondrial disorders)
 - **Heart disease** (such as congenital heart disease, congestive heart failure and coronary artery disease)
 - **Lung disease** including asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (chronic bronchitis or emphysema) or other chronic conditions associated with impaired lung function or that require home oxygen
 - **Neurological and neurologic and neurodevelopment conditions** [including disorders of the brain, spinal cord, peripheral nerve, and muscle such as cerebral palsy, epilepsy (seizure disorders), stroke, intellectual disability, moderate to severe developmental delay, muscular dystrophy, or spinal cord injury]
 - Resource: [CDC Mitigation Strategies - Appendix A](#)

Category 3 Substantial Community Transmission

Large scale community transmission, healthcare staffing significantly impacted, multiple cases within communal settings like healthcare facilities, schools, mass gatherings, etc.

Additional strategies should be considered when there is substantial transmission in the local community in addition to those implemented when there is no, minimal, or moderate transmission. These strategies include:

Continue to coordinate with local health officials.

- If local health officials have determined there is substantial transmission of COVID-19 within the community, they will provide guidance to administrators on the best course of action for schools. These strategies are expected to extend across multiple programs, schools, or school districts within the community, as they are not necessarily tied to cases within schools.

Consider extended school dismissals.

- In collaboration with local health officials, implement extended school dismissals (e.g., dismissals for longer than two weeks). This longer-term, and likely broader-reaching, dismissal strategy is intended to slow transmission rates of COVID-19 in the community.
- During extended school dismissals, also cancel extracurricular group activities, school-based afterschool programs, and large events (e.g., assemblies, spirit nights, field trips, and sporting events).
- Remember to implement strategies to ensure the continuity of education (e.g., distance learning) as well as meal programs and other essential services for students.

Communication and Guidance for Parents and Staff

My child attends a school where a COVID-19 case has been confirmed. What should I do?

- **Guidance from local public health districts may be given on a case-by-case basis.** Transmission takes place with close contact (shared a classroom, was seated next to the person for at least 10 minutes), and there is a chance your student was not exposed (in another wing of the school). Some examples of guidance may include:
 - Monitor for signs and symptoms – [Symptom Self Checker](#) / [Spanish Version](#) or the [COVID-19 Screen Tool](#)
- If a student or staff is medium or high-risk reference:
 - [Who should self-quarantine after potential COVID-19 exposure.](#)
 - Encourage good hygiene – stop handshaking, clean hands at the door and at regular intervals, avoid touching your face and cover coughs and sneezes.
 - Stay home if you are sick or have a sick family member in your home.
 - If recommended by the CDC, wear a face covering, but keep in mind this may cause an increase in touching the eyes, nose, and mouth.
- The CDC does not recommend testing for people who do not have symptoms

What is considered a “close contact”?

- The CDC defines it as *a person that has been within 6 feet of the infected person for a prolonged period of time (about 10 minutes).*

When can a student or staff member discontinue home isolation?

- Persons who have tested positive for COVID-19 or who have not been tested and were directed to care for themselves at home may discontinue home isolation under the following conditions:
 - At least 3 days (72 hours) have passed *since recovery* defined as resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications **and**
 - improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath); **and**,
 - At least 7 days have passed *since symptoms first appeared*.

What should I include in my message to our school community of a confirmed case that has been in our school?*

*Public Health Districts will work to identify, notify, and monitor close contacts of confirmed COVID-19 cases in school settings in accordance with CDC guidance. **This is not an expectation of the school or the district.**

- Possible dates of exposure
- Remind employees that there is current community spread of COVID-19. Advise them to watch for signs and symptoms which develop within 2 – 14 days of exposure.
- Remind employees how to best protect themselves from COVID-19 and the importance of staying home if they are sick.
- Let your employees know what your establishment is doing as a result of exposure (e.g. closing, cleaning)
- Remind your employees of the establishment’s illness policy.
- Where to find reputable sources and information for COVID-19
 - [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
 - [Panhandle Health District](#); [Public Health – Idaho North Central District](#); [Central District Health](#); [Southwest District Health](#); [South Central Public Health](#); [Southeastern Idaho Public Health](#); [East Idaho Public Health](#)
 - [Governor’s Coronavirus Website](#)
 - Resource: [CDC FAQs](#)