



STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

A Memo from the New Jersey Department of Education

Date: December 16, 2021
To: Chief School Administrators, Charter School and Renaissance School Project Leads, Approved Private School for Students with Disabilities and Nonpublic School Administrators
Route To: Principals and School Nurses
From: Jorden Schiff, Ed.D., Assistant Commissioner
Division of Educational Services

Updated New Jersey Department of Health COVID-19 Guidance

The New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH) has updated the COVID-19 Public Health Recommendations for Local Health Departments for K-12 Schools. The updates can be found on the NJDOH website at [Department of Health | Communicable Disease Service | COVID-19: Information for Schools \(state.nj.us\)](https://www.njdoh.state.nj.us/Health-Communicable-Disease-Service/COVID-19-Information-for-Schools). Updates are highlighted within the document. Below is a summary of changes.

Key Updates

Alternative Diagnosis: Evaluation by a health care provider is necessary to confirm a diagnosis of COVID-19, establish an alternative diagnosis, and to determine the need for COVID-19 testing. Clinical evaluation and/or testing for COVID-19 may be considered for ANY COVID-19 compatible symptoms, depending on suspicion of illness from a health care provider. Testing is strongly recommended, especially when there are multiple unlinked cases in the school and during periods of moderate and high levels of community transmission.

During moderate and high transmission levels, individuals with COVID-19 compatible symptoms **and no known exposure to a COVID-19 case in the last 14 days**, regardless of vaccination status, may follow the [NJDOH School Exclusion List](#) to determine when they may return to school **only if they have an alternative diagnosis** (i.e., strep throat, influenza, worsening of chronic illness) supported by clinical evaluation.

Reduced Exclusion for Close Contacts: While a 14-day quarantine period is optimal, NJDOH considers the CDC options to shorten quarantine to be acceptable alternatives in the school setting.

During all levels of community transmission and during outbreaks, excluded individuals who are close contacts of staff or students who tested positive for COVID-19 and who are asymptomatic may use a reduced exclusion period of 10 days (or 7 days with negative test results collected at 5-7 days) but continue to monitor for symptoms for 14 days after exposure.

Contact information

Should you have any questions, please reach out to your [County Office of Education](#).

c: Members, State Board of Education
Angelica Allen-McMillan, Ed.D., Acting Commissioner of Education
NJDOE Staff
Statewide Parent Advocacy Network
Garden State Coalition of Schools
NJ LEE Group