



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H., Secretary

STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Mohammed Choudhury, Superintendent

Memorandum

TO: Local Education Agencies
Nonpublic Schools
Licensed and Registered Child Care Providers

FROM: Mohammed Choudhury, State Superintendent of Schools
Nilesh Kalyanaraman, MD, Deputy Secretary for Public Health Services

CC: Local Health Officers

DATE: July 11, 2023

SUBJECT: **Guidance Regarding COVID-19 and Other Respiratory Illnesses in K-12 Schools and Child Care**

The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) and Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) recommend that schools and child care programs follow the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) [Operational Guidance for K-12 Schools and Early Care and Education Programs](#) for the upcoming 2023-2024 school year.

As per the CDC, routine prevention strategies should be implemented to decrease the risk of COVID-19 and other respiratory illness transmission in schools and child care programs. The [COVID-19 Hospital Admission Levels and Associated Prevention Strategies](#) within the CDC guidance should be used to inform decision making about the implementation of additional layered prevention strategies. MDH and MSDE continue to recommend that local school systems, nonpublic schools, and child care programs consult with their local health departments on implementing these CDC recommendations.

COVID-19 Testing

Over the Counter (OTC) test kits will continue to be provided by MDH to public and non-public schools upon request for the 2023-2024 school year. Schools can distribute these test kits to students and families at their discretion for diagnostic testing and/or screening testing. It is recommended that schools refer to CDC guidance in [Considerations for SARS-CoV-2 Antigen Testing](#) and [Self-Testing at Home](#).

Point of Care (POC) test kits will be made available to School Based Health Centers and will no longer be distributed by MDH for use in school health suites.

Ordering Process: Schools can order test kits via a [Google form](#). Orders are generally delivered the following week. Schools can email mdh.k12testing@maryland.gov with questions/concerns.

School and Child Care Outbreaks

Schools and child care programs must continue to follow existing procedures for reporting communicable diseases (COMAR 10.06.01) and immediately notify the local health department of a COVID-19 outbreak. The current outbreak definitions can be found in the attachment to this memo.

The local health department will recommend control measures in response to the outbreak which may include exclusion of ill students/children and staff, mask usage for cases and contacts, increased handwashing, increased environmental cleaning, and parent/guardian notification.

In certain situations, additional control measures may be recommended by the health department including masking of students and staff at the classroom, grade, or school/program level; and rescheduling or pausing higher risk activities or moving them outside if possible. Temporary suspension of in-person learning or operations may also be advisable under certain limited conditions to protect the safety of students/children, staff and their families. These decisions will be made on a case by case basis in coordination with the local health department, the local education agency, and child care licensing specialist as applicable.

Note: This guidance replaces all previous school and child care guidance documents issued by MDH and MSDE in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Questions about this guidance as it pertains to schools may be directed to Jasmin Whitfield at jasmin.whitfield@maryland.gov.

Questions about this guidance as it pertains to child care programs may be directed to Manjula Paul at manjula.paul1@maryland.gov.

Enclosure: COVID-19 Outbreak Definitions

COVID-19 Outbreak Definitions

<p>Child Care and Pre-K Programs</p>	<p><u>Family Child Care Homes:</u> Two or more COVID-19 cases among providers, provider's household members, or attendees with onsets (or, if asymptomatic, collection dates) within a 10-day period, and who are epidemiologically linked. To open an outbreak investigation, cases must be from at least two separate households.</p> <p><u>Child Care Center:</u> Two or more COVID-19 cases among staff or attendees with onsets (or, if asymptomatic, collection dates) within a 10-day period, and who are epidemiologically linked, but not household contacts.</p>
<p>K-12 Schools, Youth Sports, and Youth Camps</p>	<p><u>Cohort:</u> Three or more COVID-19 cases among students/teachers/staff in a specified group with onsets (or, if asymptomatic, collection dates) within a 10-day period, and who are epidemiologically linked in the school setting, but not household contacts.</p> <p><u>School-wide:</u> Five or more cohorts with cases from separate households that meet the classroom/cohort outbreak definition that occurs within 10 days; OR 5% or more unrelated students/teachers/staff have confirmed COVID-19 within a 10-day period [minimum of 10 unrelated students/teachers/staff].</p>