



VERSION DATE: 2/28/22

February 28, 2022

New Masking Guidance Update
Supplemental Information
to the **["Interim NYSDOH Guidance for Classroom Instruction in P-12 Schools During the 2021-2022 Academic Year"](#)**

Summary of changes from February 4, 2022, Interim NYSDOH Guidance for Classroom Instruction:

- This document removes the statewide requirement for universal masking in schools, and applies to P-12 elementary and secondary public, charter, private and state-operated schools, including residential schools and programs serving students with disabilities, as regulated by the New York State Education Department.
- Local health departments (LHDs) are encouraged to assess conditions and tailor guidance to their jurisdiction. A LHD may implement masking requirements that are more restrictive than the state, and LHDs and school districts and private schools should consult and collaborate on masking and testing decisions.
 - Some school districts cross county boundaries. Schools should follow the guidance of the LHD for the county in which the school building is located.
- In all settings, masking continues to be required upon return from isolation during days 6 through 10 after COVID-19 infection.
- Masking, regardless of vaccination status, is strongly recommended for 10 days after a known exposure.
- Testing on Day 5 after exposure is strongly recommended to detect infection among individuals identified as exposed or potentially exposed; identification of exposed individuals may be simplified by using group (e.g., classroom, school bus) rather than individual assessments. Contact tracing ("individual assessments of exposure") also may be helpful to identify exposed individuals.
- Schools should notify affected families, staff, and teachers of exposure to an individual who reports a new COVID-19 infection.
- All schools are strongly encouraged to use other mitigation measures including improved ventilation, access to and encouragement of vaccination, surveillance testing, and access to free over the counter at-home test kits.
- This document contains a new section entitled "Implementation of the Removal of Mandated
- Two previous sections, "Close Contact Exception Update" and "Mask Breaks in Schools" were removed, because the key points were incorporated elsewhere

I. Implementation of the Removal of Mandated Masking in the School Setting

The state requirement for universal masking in P-12 school settings ended on March 2, 2022. Decisions on masking that are more protective

choice, expectation, or requirement, are not stigmatized, bullied, or made to feel uncomfortable, and likewise, those for whom masks have not been required or recommended are not stigmatized, bullied, or made to feel uncomfortable. Pursuant to the Dignity For All Students Act, students have the right to a school environment free from harassment and bullying.

- At least 5 days after the last date of exposure or potential exposure, regardless of vaccination status,
- If the individual is not fully vaccinated and attending or working at school after an exposure or potential exposure, frequent testing (e.g., daily, every other day, at least twice within 5 days) from the date of the exposure or potential exposure (Day 0) through at least day 5 should be strongly considered and encouraged,
- Exclude from school if a test is positive and/or exclude from school and test as soon as possible if symptoms develop,
- Exception: Individuals with lab-confirmed COVID-19 within the past 3 months do not need to get tested unless they develop symptoms.

Symptomatic individuals, regardless of vaccination status or recent infection, should stay home until tested and if positive or not tested, should isolate for 5 days, or until other criteria are met for school attendance (e.g., resolution of fever), whichever is longer. The [NYSDOH flow chart](#) addresses school attendance and requirements for children who have symptoms consistent with vaccine side effects shortly after receipt of the COVID-19 vaccine.

Exposed school staff and students and/or their par.1 (ey)-1.9(S)1g9.TS2T6 (o)-t0-3.6 (f)2.6 ()-ians ar.1 (.1 (p)2.2 (ri)10.6 that recommended testing occurs. Schools may supply testing kits to affected families for testing at home and/or provide access to existing testing programs at the school. To ensure that all families can comply with recommended testing, schools

There are many resources available to support testing for the school population. Please visit the [CDC Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools](#) which provides a list of resources for screening testing programs in schools and the New York State Department of Health Isolation and Quarantine [webpage](#) for additional information.

III. Exemption to weekly unvaccinated staff/teacher testing for recently recovered persons

School staff/teachers who were diagnosed with and recovered from COVID-19 within the past 3 months are not subject to the weekly testing requirement established in 10 NYCRR 2.62, which remains in effect. Asymptomatic individuals exposed to COVID-19 who have been previously diagnosed with laboratory confirmed COVID-19, and have since recovered, are not required to retest and quarantine within 3 months after the date of symptom onset from the initial COVID-19 infection or date of first positive

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- The feasibility of conducting frequent testing (e.g., at least every other day) during the 5 days after exposure,
- Whether there are individuals in the classroom who are known to be at high risk for severe disease,
- The individual's vaccination status,
- Other mitigation measures in place (e.g., ventilation, distancing) and whether they can be strengthened or are already optimized,
- Circumstances of the child's learning and school attendance needs (e.g., cannot participate in remote instruction).