

Essex County Public Schools

COVID-19 Common Questions and Answers for Parents

April 16, 2021

How are parents/ guardians notified if their child is a contact of a person who tests positive for COVID-19?

The Virginia Health Department assigns contact tracers to every positive COVID-19 case. These contact tracers determine who needs to quarantine and for how long. School employees do not make decisions concerning quarantine(s) because they are not trained health care workers. A contact tracer from the Three Rivers Health Department will call you if your child may have been in contact with a person who tests positive for COVID-19. If your child is placed under quarantine, the contact tracer will provide the dates of the quarantine.

How will I know if there has been a positive case involving the school or school-related transportation?

A school messenger notice will go out every time the school division is notified that there has been a positive case with exposure within the school or school-related transportation. This alert is sent to parents per protocol developed by the Virginia Department of Health. The Virginia Department of Health determines who has been exposed and who should quarantine. A Virginia Department of Health contact tracer will call you, ask questions and provide medical directions if your child is considered a contact.

How do I get a note to show my child has been placed under quarantine or that he/she can return to school after exposure or a positive test?

A contact tracer or your own health care provider will provide a return to school letter upon request. After you secure the note, send a copy to the school.

Will I be notified if my child is a contact of a contact?

Contacts of contacts are not notified or placed under quarantine. You will only receive a notification if your child was in contact with someone who has tested positive. The Virginia Department of Health makes these determinations and Essex County Public Schools follows the guidelines set forth by the Virginia Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control.

Who is considered a contact?

A contact is someone who was exposed to a person who tests positive for COVID-19 during a time in which the person was contagious. Someone is considered contagious two days before a positive test or two days prior to the onset of symptoms. A contact is a person who has been around a contagious person with their mask off or has been closer than 6 feet for more than a total of 15 minutes. Children should never touch others or give them hugs. They should maintain as much space as possible if eating or drinking since their mask has to be down.

If your child is sick, should they report to school?

Children should never come to school sick and if they become sick at school, you will be notified to pick them up immediately. Sick students should get a COVID-19 test. Seek guidance from your child's medical provider for assistance.

What is the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)?

HIPAA is an act that was signed into Federal law in 1996. Part of this law ensures the security and confidentiality of all health information. Disclosing that someone has tested positive for COVID-19 or telling others that a particular student or an employee has been placed in quarantine is a violation of federal law. School administrators and health department workers will handle this information on a need-to-know basis in order to protect students and staff; however specific and personal information cannot be disclosed or shared.

How can I keep my child safe?

Remind your child to follow all social distancing protocols such as wearing a mask (over the nose and mouth) at all times and to maintain 6 feet of distance from others at all times.

How does COVID-19 spread?

Early in the pandemic it was thought that COVID-19 spread easily on surfaces. As we have learned more about COVID-19 that idea has changed. COVID-19 spreads most easily from person to person in the form of droplets from the mouth and nose. This occurs when people talk, sing, sneeze or cough. According to the CDC, COVID-19 can sometimes spread on surfaces, however you are most likely to get the virus by inhaling microscopic droplets in the air.

Are schools safe?

Research indicates that schools are safe if all social distancing protocols are followed. Your child should wear a mask properly, create space between others and not come to school if sick.

How do you properly wear a mask?

The mask must cover the mouth and nose at all times.

For detailed information on COVID-19 mitigation please reference the ECPS Return to School Plan.

http://www.essex.k12.va.us/UserFiles/Servers/Server_2852134/File/ECPS%20Return%20to%20School%20Plan_Updated%2011-20-20.pdf