

A Strong and Healthy Start: Safety and Health Guidance for Vermont Schools FAQ 2: Quarantine and Staying Home When Sick

Rev. Aug 19, 2020

The Vermont Agency of Education (AOE) has released joint guidance with the Vermont Department of Health on safely reopening schools. This document, A Strong and Healthy Start: Safety and Health Guidance for Vermont Schools, provides health guidance to school administrators and school personnel as they plan and implement the reopening of schools for the 2020-21 School Year in the context of COVID-19.

This Frequently Asked Questions document responds to follow up questions from educators and administrators and is intended to clarify and expand on the guidance.

Q1. What will the expectation for students and staff be who do become sick during the school year? Will they be required to stay home and self-quarantine for two weeks after being symptom free?

Staff and students should stay home if they have tested positive for or are showing COVID-19 symptoms, such as cough, fever (100.4 or greater), shortness of breath, chills, fatigue, muscle pain or body aches, headache, sore throat, loss of taste or smell, congestion or runny nose, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea.

Per the Health and Safety Guidance, students (or their parents if developmentally appropriate) will be asked every day to attest that they are symptom-free before the student attends school.

Students and staff can return to [school](#) after they have been sick with COVID-19 when they are no longer considered contagious. If a student or staff member has a fever of more than 100.4°F, but no specific diagnosis, they may return to school after they have had no fever for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medicine, such as Tylenol or Advil. The pediatric health care community is working with school nurses to determine return to school decision-making algorithms after illness.

Students or staff who have had [close contact](#) with a person with COVID-19 may return to school after they have completed any Vermont Department of Health-mandated quarantine.

The Vermont Department of Health Epidemiology Department and [Contact Tracing](#) Team will work with schools and advise on any quarantine requirements for students and staff if they are exposed at school. The Health Department has also provided a framework for adult primary care to engage in shared decision making for school staff/educators to consider risk of COVID and chronic conditions.

Q2. May we require a doctor's note before a student or staff member returns to school after being sick with COVID-19?

Districts should consult with their legal counsel when drafting their policies, but in general requiring a doctor's note to return to school is permissible but not a required strategy.

Q3. Do kids that have tested positive to COVID-19 test need a negative test before returning to school?

Any students who receive a positive COVID-19 test, at any school they attend, will receive direct support from the Department of Health on when it is safe for the student to return to school. A test may be part of that calculus but will not be necessary in all cases. The Vermont Department of Health does not provide return to work/school clearance letters.

Q4. Will staff members who travel to a high-risk area be expected to quarantine? For how long? How will we know what a high-risk area or state is?

The State of Vermont has determined that any county with less than 400 active cases of COVID-19 per one million residents is now eligible for quarantine-free leisure travel.

The [Agency of Commerce and Community Development](#) has developed a map populated with raw data from Johns Hopkins University which uses multiple factors to determine how many active cases are in each county. Read the complete methodology for how active cases per million residents is being calculated. The aggregated data by county is also available.

Staff members and students who [travel](#) to a high-risk area must follow [Vermont Department of Health guidance for quarantine](#) upon returning to Vermont. Districts may wish to limit out-of-state travel by students and staff for school-sanctioned or professional development events. All Vermonters, including educators, are encouraged to weigh the risks and consequences of travel to high-risk areas before doing so.

Q5. What are the [quarantine](#) requirements for staff who live in a [neighboring state](#)?

Per the Vermont Department of Health People who live near the Vermont border and regularly travel to and from a neighboring state may make day trips to Vermont for essential work, health care, and other essential needs like groceries or visitation for parental shared custody without quarantining.

Q6. There are students whose parents have joint custody, but one parent lives out of state based on custody arrangements. These students may be travelling out of state every weekend or every other weekend. Will they have to quarantine after each visit?

Per the Vermont Department of Health, people traveling for essential purposes, including parental shared custody, do not need to quarantine.

Q7. How will requirements to stay home or quarantine impact sick pay for educators and support staff?

Questions related to pay or benefits should be referred to your district or school HR representative, including questions about paid sick leave under the [Families First Coronavirus Response Act](#).