

11/1/21

Family Communication: Close Contact Quarantine Updates

Greetings Gator Families:

The Washington State Department of Health has recently updated its guidelines and protocols for school districts in the event a student or staff member is considered a close contact to a person who has tested positive for COVID-19. This information presented today will go into effect immediately upon your receipt of it. We would also like to emphasize that only protocols surrounding close contact quarantines have changed. What has not changed is the 10 day required isolation period for staff and students who test positive for COVID-19. We also ask that you contact the school district offices any time you have a case of COVID-19 that would impact the school, and that everyone in the district continues to wear their face coverings, practice physical distancing, and stay home when sick.

For review, a close contact is defined as a person who was exposed to a person with a confirmed case of COVID-19. Exposure includes being within 6 feet of a confirmed case for 15 cumulative minutes in a 24 hour period while the person was infectious-that is defined as 2 days prior to the onset of symptoms, or two days prior to the collection date of a positive test. In K-12 indoor or outdoor classrooms or other structured environments with assigned seating, the close contact definition excludes students who were at least 3 feet away from an infected student when both students were wearing face coverings and other preventive strategies were in place. The Washington State DOH has identified 4 possible options for quarantine for schools when a person is identified as close contact.

Option #1 is to participate in a Test to Stay program. This is only an option to families if the close contact exposure took place at school. In test to stay a student is able to continue to come to school if they are symptom free and:

- The parent/guardian agree to and sign off on the Test to Stay Program, AND
- The student tests negative on days 5 and 7 of a modified quarantine, AND
- The family and student agree to follow the modified quarantine (quarantine at home when not at school), AND
- The student does not develop symptoms during their modified quarantine, and/or there are no new cases of COVID-19 within the household.

Option #2 is a 7 day at home quarantine from the date of last close contact to the infected individual. The student is eligible for return after 7 days if:

- Student tests for COVID-19 no sooner than on or after day 5 post exposure and is negative, AND:
- Proof of a negative result is provided including:
 - First and last name the individual tested
 - The type of test performed (molecular or antigen)
 - The date the specimen was collected-must be on or after day 5 post-exposure, AND:

- The student does not develop symptoms during their 7 day quarantine after a negative test result and continues to monitor symptoms until day 14.

Options #3 and 4 include longer quarantine periods, but no required testing to return to school unless symptoms occur. For option #3, a 10 day quarantine period is used, and students can return 10 days after the last date of close contact if they are symptom free, and continue to monitor symptoms until day 14. If symptoms occur, the student should remain in quarantine and be tested. Option #4 is similar to Option #3, but includes a 14 day quarantine period. The determination of the 10 day or 14 day quarantine period will be made by gathering information and consulting with our local health jurisdiction, Mason County Public Health.

There are also two groups of individuals who are exempt from quarantine if they are considered close contacts. First, any individual who is fully vaccinated and does not have symptoms is not required to quarantine, but should monitor symptoms and get tested after day 5 from exposure. Similarly, an individual who has had a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the past 3 months, has recovered, and does not have symptoms, is not required to quarantine. Those individuals should consider an antigen test between days 5 and 7 of exposure, and monitor symptoms and get evaluated by a health care provider if symptoms occur.

We understand that this information can be confusing. Please know that in all cases where a student or staff member has been exposed to a confirmed case of COVID-19 we will do our best to communicate with families and clarify protocols. Additional information about Test to Stay will be forthcoming, and was distributed to families during Family Conferences. As always, please contact me with any questions.

Best,

Mr. S