

9/28/2020

Memo: Mask guidance and quarantine changes

To: Students, Parents and staff of all schools in Palo Alto County and Terrill Elementary

From: Sarah Strohman, Director of Public Health, Palo Alto County

Local Public Health received new guidance today regarding the need to quarantine students when exposed to a positive COVID case within the school setting from Iowa Department of Public Health.

It has been identified through completed studies within the state of Iowa that we are seeing adequate protection from the use of face masks and that the rate of transmission with the use of face masks within the school setting is low when all parties are correctly wearing masks.

Effective immediately, all schools are now mandated to wear masks. This includes students grades 3 and above as well as staff. The only exceptions will be those who have a sufficient physician note stating why masks cannot be worn. Schools may choose to mandate masks across all grades if they so choose.

With this new mandate, students who are exposed to a positive case **within** the school setting, in which both parties were wearing masks, will **NOT** be required to quarantine for 14 days. This does not change the need for isolation of positive cases, which will continue to be 10 days after onset of symptoms or in the absence of symptoms, ten days after a positive COVID test. Effective Wednesday, September 30th, any students that are quarantined at home due to a **school** exposure will be allowed and encouraged to return to school.

Exposure within the home or community setting will continue to be handled the same as current recommendations, requiring 14 days of quarantine after last known contact with a positive COVID case.

As public health, we ask you to speak with your student regarding the importance of compliance with masks. As a parent, I understand the difficulty of compliance with students, but I also know the benefits of being in school are far greater.

Please feel free to contact me at the below email address with any questions or concerns you may have regarding this new mandate.

Sincerely, Sarah Strohman RN, BSN
Director, Palo Alto County Public Health
strohmas@mercyhealth.com

COVID-19 Response: When to Quarantine

For Business, Education, and Child Care Settings


For non-healthcare, non-residential settings, quarantine is no longer recommended if a potential exposure occurs while both the infectious individual and the close contacts are wearing face coverings consistently and correctly.

- In all scenarios below, an individual is considered a **close contact** when they have been within **6 feet of the COVID-19 positive individual for 15 minutes**.
- Individuals who are a **close contact due to exposure to a household member are required to quarantine for at least 14 days**. Quarantine is used to keep someone who might have been exposed to COVID-19 away from others.
- **Individuals who have COVID-19 must isolate for at least 10 days**. Isolation keeps someone who is infected with the virus away from others, even in their home.

Everyone Masked


When a masked individual tests positive and close contacts were wearing masks...

ISOLATE



COVID Positive

SELF-MONITOR




Close Contacts

Close Contacts Masked


When an unmasked individual tests positive and close contacts were wearing masks...

ISOLATE



COVID Positive

QUARANTINE




Close Contacts

Some Close Contacts Masked


When a masked individual tests positive and SOME close contacts were wearing masks...

ISOLATE




COVID Positive

QUARANTINE



Close Contacts

SELF-MONITOR




SELF-MONITOR

No One Masked


When an unmasked individual tests positive and close contacts were NOT wearing masks...

ISOLATE



COVID Positive

QUARANTINE



Close Contacts