



Updated Guidance to COVID-19 Quarantines in the School Setting for Taney County Schools

On November 12, 2020, Governor Parsons released new guidance regarding COVID-19 related quarantines in the school setting. Supported by MO DHSS and DESE, modifications follow Missouri DHSS's reports of low numbers of students in quarantines testing COVID-19 positive. Locally, Taney County schools have anecdotally seen similar results with low numbers of known student-to-student transmission occurring in the classroom setting. While research on this novel virus is ongoing, current evidence of child-to-child transmission within educational settings is limited.

In response to local trends and updated guidance from Governor Parsons, MO DHSS, and DESE, the Taney County Health Department (TCHD) in partnership with local Taney County Schools is implementing new guidance for schools in Taney County.

This new guidance:

- Does not exempt close contacts from quarantine but rather modifies their quarantine to permit school-based education
- Only applies to the school-based educational setting
- Is applicable only when both the COVID-19 positive individual and the close contact, as defined by CDC guidance, are wearing face coverings appropriately throughout the duration of the exposure period
- Allows close contacts to attend school as long as they remain symptom free, appropriately masked at all times, and as long they are closely monitored for symptom development
- Does not include extracurricular activities, activities outside of the school setting, nor to the general public
- Does not apply when the exposure event occurred outside of a school-based educational setting

School-based modified quarantine is modeled on the Critical Infrastructure Framework

On August 18, 2020, the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), as a branch of Homeland Security, updated its Critical Infrastructure sectors to include education and educational institutions. This guidance was endorsed by the White House but has not been adopted by the State of Missouri. However, the directive put forth by Governor Parsons on November 12, 2020 aligns with the Critical Infrastructure Guidance and allows for an existing framework by which to model Taney County's School-based modified quarantine. Governor Parson's directive applied to the Critical Infrastructure Frameworks looks like the following:

Students, teachers, and staff that are identified as a close contact either within the school setting, or outside of it, must still quarantine. To qualify for the school-based modified quarantine, school administration must agree to allow quarantined individuals to enter their schools. Students, teachers, and school-based staff must remain symptom free and must wear an approved face covering appropriately at all times to qualify. Activities that do not support in-class education are not subject to modified quarantine; this includes extracurricular activities, clubs, sports, or non-school based activities. It is important for individuals under a school-based modified quarantine to recognize that their modification applies only to education and education-supportive activities. These modifications do not allow for non-quarantine activities such as going out in public, shopping, socializing, or attending group events or activities.

The following activities are included in a school-based modified quarantine as long as all requirements are met:

- Riding the bus to and from regular school activities
- Attending in-person classes
- Teaching or conducting other work duties necessary to permit the education of children K-12

The following are examples of activities that are not included in a school-based modified quarantine regardless of school requirements:

- Attending or participating in extracurricular activities, clubs, or sporting events
- Conducting non-school based activities such as shopping, going through a drive through, in-person socializing, going out in public, or attending group events or activities
- Education of individuals outside of the K-12 parameters

As per MO DHSS and DESE guidelines, exposures that happen outside of a regular school-based setting do not qualify for modified quarantine. As an example, if a student is identified as a close-contact at an afterschool club or sporting event, they will not qualify for modified quarantine regardless of masked status.

Criteria for School-Based Modified Quarantine:

Requirements

School Requirements

1. School must have a face-covering mandate in place addressing usage and type of face coverings in the school setting.* Per CDC guidance, face and mouth shields are not considered an effective face covering and those wearing face and mouth shields will be required to follow traditional quarantine.
2. Modified quarantine only applies to students and staff in the classroom setting. Extracurricular and social settings are not considered classroom setting. Students and staff will be required to follow the traditional quarantine guidelines outside of the classroom setting per CDC guidelines.
3. Mitigation strategies must remain in place and diligent adherence is a must.
4. Social distancing must remain as a keystone to any stop-the-spread strategy.

5. Schools shall maintain contact tracing capabilities for school-based exposures as well as to confirm the proper use of a school-approved face covering during those exposures. Face and mouth shields do not qualify as face covering as per CDC guidance.
6. Schools should screen incoming students, staff, and teachers for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and monitor for symptom development throughout the day.

To qualify for a school-based modified quarantine, students, teachers, and staff must:

1. Wear face coverings correctly at all times
2. Monitor for symptom development
3. Report COVID-19 symptoms promptly to their school contact or nurse
4. Not attend school if they develop symptoms of COVID-19 or must leave immediately if symptoms develop during the course of the school day
5. Seek testing if COVID-19 symptoms develop during the modified quarantine period
6. Continue to social distance and practice good hand hygiene
7. Be conducting an activity critical to sustaining or supporting classroom education

*The use of “Gator-style” face coverings should be considered carefully. If Gator-style face coverings are permitted, it is recommended that they be doubled as to offer two-layers of protection similar to that of cloth masks. Material, thickness, and how tight or loose the weave is should all be considered prior to allowing Gator-style coverings.

Discontinuation of school-based modified quarantine

Triggers for returning to traditional quarantine

1. If COVID-19 transmission is identified in the classroom setting, TCHD and the school may decide traditional quarantine methods are required and suspend modified quarantines. Reestablishment of modified quarantine will be reconsidered following 14 consecutive days (one disease cycle) without evidence or a confirmed or probable COVID case in the school setting.
2. Special high-risk situations will be evaluated on a case by case basis and traditional quarantine may be required if deemed appropriate by TCHD.
3. Lack of adherence to school-based modified quarantine by students, teachers, or support staff, or by schools, resulting in a risk to the public’s health.

Conclusion

COVID-19 remains a new and highly-infectious disease. While the speed by which the global community has learned about and responded to COVID-19 far exceeds the response to any emerging disease throughout history, much remains unknown. COVID-19 response, guidance, and mitigation strategies continue to change and evolve as more is learned and as the global pandemic unfolds.

School-based modified quarantine is a new concept for our schools and our community without a clear-standing, evidence-based, school-based model with which to frame this change upon. As such, both the Taney County Health Department, and Taney County Schools, will continuously evaluate the impact these changes are having to our schools and our communities. As more guidance or applicable and

relevant research becomes available, we will work together to revise and improve this model as a means to improve the health of our schools and our community.

Title

Taney County Health Department

Title

School District Representative