

**Montgomery County Office of Public Health**  
**Recommendation for COVID-19 Prevention for K to 12 Schools**  
**2021-2022 School Year**

Montgomery County Office of Public Health (MCOPH) in collaboration with Montgomery County Superintendents have developed recommendations for the Montgomery County School community to prevent disease transmission in the school environment.

Prevention Strategy	Recommendations
<b>Promotion of COVID-19 Vaccination</b>	<p>Achieving high levels of COVID-19 vaccination among eligible students as well as teachers, staff, and household members is one of the most critical strategies to help schools safely resume full operations.</p> <p>Vaccination is currently the leading public health prevention strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic. People who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 are at low risk of symptomatic or severe infection. A <a href="#">growing body of evidence</a> suggests that people who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 are less likely to have a symptomatic infection or transmit COVID-19 to others than people who are not fully vaccinated. In most settings, people who are <a href="#">fully vaccinated</a> can safely resume activities they did before the pandemic, except where prevention measures are required by federal, state, local, tribal, or territorial laws, rules, and regulations, including local business and workplace guidance.</p> <p>Please go to <a href="http://www.montcopa.org/covid-19vaccine">www.montcopa.org/covid-19vaccine</a> for more information on COVID-19 vaccinations.</p>
<b>Stay Home When Sick</b>	Encourage staff, students and parent(s)/guardian(s) to stay home if sick to help support reducing the risk of transmission of COVID-19 and other illnesses/disease.
<b>Physical Distancing</b>	<p>Because of the importance of in-person learning, schools where not everyone is fully vaccinated should implement physical distancing to the extent possible within their structures, but should not exclude students from in-person learning if the minimum distancing recommendations is not possible in some situations.</p> <p>Schools where not everyone is fully vaccinated should implement physical distancing to the extent possible. Maintaining at least 3 feet of physical distancing between students within classrooms, combined with indoor mask wearing by people who are not fully vaccinated will reduce risk of transmission. A distance of 6ft is recommended between students and teachers/staff, and between teachers/staff who are not vaccinated.</p>

	<p>When it is not possible to maintain a physical distancing at least 3 feet, such as when schools cannot fully re-open while maintaining these distances, it is especially important to layer multiple prevention strategies, such as indoor masking, screening testing, cohorting, improving ventilation, handwashing and covering coughs and sneezes, staying home when sick with symptoms consistent with an infectious illness including COVID-19, and regular cleaning to help reduce transmission risk.</p> <p>Cohorting: Cohorting means keeping people together in small groups and having each group stay together throughout an entire day. Cohorting can be used to limit the number of students, teachers, and staff who come in contact with each other, especially when it is challenging to maintain physical distancing. For example groups of young children, and in areas of moderate, substantial and high transmission levels.</p>
<p><b>Consistent and Correct Mask Usage</b>  <a href="#"><i>Improve How Your Mask Protects You</i></a></p>	<p>COVID-19 is transmitted predominately by inhalation of respiratory droplets generated when people cough, sneeze, sing, talk, or breathe. Masks are primarily intended to reduce the emission of virus-laden droplets (“source control”), which is especially relevant for asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic infected wearers who feel well and may be unaware of their infectiousness to others, and who are estimated to account for more than 50% of transmissions.<sup>1,2</sup> Masks also help reduce inhalation of these droplets by the wearer.</p> <p>On Tuesday, August 31, Pennsylvania’s Acting Secretary of Health signed an <a href="#"><u>Order requiring face coverings to be worn in all school entities</u></a>, including school districts, brick and mortar and cyber charter schools, private and parochial schools, career and technical centers, intermediate units, and early learning and other child care settings, effective Tuesday, September 7, 2021.</p> <p>CDC/ Health and Human Services (HHS) order for wearing of face masks while on conveyances requires individuals to wear masks while traveling on both public and private school transportation. <a href="https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/face-masks-public-transportation.html"><u>https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/face-masks-public-transportation.html</u></a></p>
<p><b>COVID-19 Screening</b>  <a href="#"><i>Project ACT-IT Operation E.T.</i></a></p> <p><a href="#"><i>Youth Sports and COVID-19: Understand the Risk</i></a></p>	<p>Screening testing can be used to help evaluate and adjust prevention strategies and provide added protection for schools that are not able to provide optimal physical distance between students.</p> <p>Schools may consider testing a random sample of at least 10% of the students who are not fully vaccinated, or conduct pooled testing of cohorts. Testing in low-prevalence settings might produce false positive results, but testing can provide an important prevention strategy and safety net to support in-person education.</p> <p>Screening testing recommended below is for individuals who are not fully vaccinated based on school district level of community transmissions. Changes in screening should be made based on 2 consecutive weeks of increased or decreased school district level of community transmission.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>School District Level of Community Transmission</b></p>

	<b>Low</b> 0-9 cases per 100,000 and <5% positivity	<b>Moderate</b> 10-49 cases per 100,000 or 5-7% positivity	<b>Substantial</b> 50-99 cases per 100,000 or 8- 9.9% positivity	<b>High</b> 100 to > 100 cases per 100,000 or >10% positivity
	No screening recommended	<b>High Risk</b> sports/activities: Once a week is recommended for unvaccinated individuals participating in sports/ activities	Low and Intermediate Risk sports/ activities: Once a week assurance testing of those unvaccinated.  High Risk sports/activities: Once a week assurance testing of those unvaccinated.  Staff Assurance Testing: Once a week assurance testing for staff that are unvaccinated.	Low and Intermediate Risk sports/ activities: Once a week assurance testing of those unvaccinated and fully vaccinated.  High Risk sports/activities: Once a week assurance testing of those unvaccinated and fully vaccinated.  Staff Assurance Testing: Once a week assurance testing for staff unvaccinated and fully vaccinated.
<b>Ventilation</b>	Along with other prevention strategies, bringing fresh outdoor air into a building helps keep virus particles from concentrating inside. This can be done by opening multiple doors and windows, using child-safe fans to increase the effectiveness of open windows, and making changes to the HVAC or air filtration systems.			
<b>Handwashing and Respiratory Etiquette</b>	Practice handwashing and respiratory etiquette to keep from getting and spreading infectious illnesses including COVID-19.  Encourage handwashing strategies which include washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available and hands are not visibly dirty, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Handwashing strategies should be encouraged after going to the bathroom, before eating, after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing, and after touching your face.  Encourage respiratory etiquette which includes covering your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing, use tissues and throw them away, and wash your hands or use hand sanitizer every time you touch your mouth or nose.			
<b>Cleaning and Disinfection</b>	Follow standard practices and appropriate regulations specific to your type of facility for minimum standards regarding cleaning and disinfection.  <a href="#"><u>CDC Cleaning and Disinfection</u></a> Cleaning with products containing soap or detergent reduces germs on surfaces by removing contaminants and decreases risk of infection from surfaces.			

<p><a href="#"><u>EPA-Registered Products</u></a></p>	<p>Disinfecting kills any remaining germs on surfaces, which further reduces any risk of spreading infection. Increase cleaning frequency or choose to disinfect (in addition to cleaning) in shared spaces if the space is a high traffic area or if certain conditions apply that can increase the risk of infection from touching surfaces: substantial or high level of transmission of COVID-19 in your school community, and the space is occupied by people at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19.</p> <p>If there has been a sick person or someone who tested positive for COVID-19 in your facility within the last 24 hours, you should clean AND disinfect the space the positive individual spent time in while infectious.</p>
<p><b>Contact Tracing including Isolation and Quarantine</b></p>	<p>Contact Tracing, Isolation and Quarantine is required in accordance with Montgomery County Public Health Code, Chapter 3, Communicable and Non-communicable Diseases. Recommendations for isolation, quarantine and testing is provided and updated on <a href="#"><u>MCOPH School Exclusion Recommendations</u></a>.</p> <p>Reflected in the <a href="#"><u>MCOPH School Exclusion Recommendations</u></a>, MCOPH adopted the close contact exception as outlined by CDC for student to student COVID-19 exposure within the indoor classrooms ONLY. If both the COVID-19 positive student and an unvaccinated student who is exposed were <i>both</i> wearing masks <i>and</i> practicing physical distancing of at least 3 ft. or more, the exposed student WILL NOT be identified as a close contact and WILL NOT need to quarantine. Close contact exemptions were adopted by CDC on July 9, 2021 and is subject to change based on CDC/PADOH guidance and Montgomery County or School District level of community transmission.</p> <p>Pre-K through 12 schools can contact MCOPH at <a href="mailto:MCSchoolsCOVID19@montcopa.org"><u>MCSchoolsCOVID19@montcopa.org</u></a> or 610-278-6211.</p>

Additional consideration not provided by MCOPH is available through CDC’s COVID-19 Prevention Strategies Most Important for Safe In-School Learning K-12 schools. [COVID-19 Prevention Strategies Most Important for Safe In-School Learning K-12 schools](#)

**References:**

1. [Pennsylvania Department of Education, Message to School Communities, July 2021 Messages, July 6, 2021](#)
2. [Pennsylvania Department of Education, ARP ESSER Health and Safety Plan: Guidance, Template, and Resources, Updated June 4, 2021](#)
3. [Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools, Updated July 9, 2021](#)
4. [Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Your Guide to Masks, Updated June 29, 2021](#)
5. [Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Order: Wearing of face masks while on conveyances and at transportation hubs, Updated June 10, 2021](#)