

September 1, 2020

Parents, Caregivers, and Staff,

As we begin the new school year, we wanted to share the efforts we will take to respond to potential COVID-19 cases and the process for contact tracing in our schools. In partnership with our local health department and the State of Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH), our goal is to maintain a consistent system of response in dealing with individuals who show signs of COVID-19, test positive for the infection, or who may have been in close contact to a positive COVID-19 case. Through our collaborative efforts and the implementation of health safety protocols and mitigation strategies, including social distancing and the use of masks, we will minimize risks to our students and staff.

In an earlier communication, Addendum 5 was shared with you and provided a guideline for districts to address issues when students or staff developed potential signs and symptoms of COVID-19. The document outlined the actions districts should take on a case-by-case basis for removing individuals from the school setting and returning them safely back to school. Addendum 5, posted on our website, will serve as an important guide to be used in consult with our health experts, including school nurses and our Director of Health, Donna Culbert.

As parents, we want you to understand the expectations related to our response and disclosure when COVID-19 cases occur within our district. It is important that you understand how we intend to keep you informed while maintaining the privacy and confidentiality for our students, families, and staff.

The following outlines critical steps in the process of investigation, response, and communication:

- The first step is to verify the information that we receive regarding a potential COVID-19 case.
- If it is determined that a student or staff member is symptomatic, has had exposure, or is a positive case, the local health director will be notified.
- Following the initial identification of a potential or valid case, an investigation will occur to determine the exposure through contact tracing.
- Contact tracing includes identification, investigation, monitoring and notification. This will be conducted through the local health director and in conjunction with the Department of Public Health (DPH). Students placed in cohorts and assigned seating on buses will help to identify contacts.
- A direct contact is defined as someone who has been less than 6 feet away for 15 minutes or more. Individuals wearing masks will help to reduce spread of infection.
- Only those individuals who have had direct exposure to a potential or validated COVID-19 case will be appropriately notified. Staff and students who may have had direct exposure will be asked to quarantine for 14 days.
- If there is a positive case in the home, then family members would need to quarantine.

- If a family member in the home is quarantining due to exposure to a positive case, family members do not have to quarantine since those members are contacts of a contact.
- Individuals who are symptomatic or asymptomatic (but have had exposure) will be asked to contact their primary care physician. If this occurs at school, the school nurse will isolate the individual and contact the parents.
- Working in consult with our Health Director, a determination will be made regarding next steps. Individual or group isolation, quarantine, or temporary school closure may be warranted depending on a given situation and the spread of infection. If a positive case is identified in the school, this does not mean the entire building needs to close. This will be determined based on the exposure through contact tracing.
- Students and staff on a bus, in a classroom, or in a building may be asked to move to distance learning should the situation warrant. Deep cleaning of a bus, classroom, or building will occur in the event positive cases or potential cases are determined.
- Communication will be sent to staff and families if there is a positive case in our schools. No names of individuals will be released to protect an individual's privacy and to maintain confidentiality.
- Depending on the number of cases and in accordance with the public health indicators in Addendum 5, the decision for continuing on hybrid, moving to all-in, or even to full remote learning for the entire district will be made in conjunction with our health director and DPH.

We know this raises anxiety for members of our school community, but we want to assure you that we will be closely monitoring the health status of our schools on a regular basis. Implementing preventative measures, including social distancing, sanitization and wearing masks, will continue to support the health and safety conditions across the district.

We appreciate your ongoing support and understanding as we enter the 2020-21 school year.



Dr. Lorrie Rodrigue
Superintendent



Donna Culbert
Newtown Director of Health