

November 30, 2020

Dear Staff and Families,

Thank you to all of the school community for your tremendous support and cooperation in these last weeks as we worked through many contact tracing situations. As the school nurses made phone calls to alert people of the need to isolate or quarantine to limit the spread of infection, it became clear that more information on how contact tracing works might be helpful for all. With that in mind, I have included below some frequently used terms and their definitions.

To make district COVID data more accessible to the school community, a “dashboard” with basic information about positive cases and contacts in the district has been posted on the district website: [COVID Data for Newtown Public Schools](#)

### **CONTACT TRACING BASICS**

**CASE:** A person who has tested positive for COVID 19. The person may or may not have symptoms.

**CONTACT:** A person who was within 6 feet of a positive case for a cumulative 15 minutes or more during the infectious period. The infectious period begins 48 hours before symptoms appear.

**CONTACTS OF A CONTACT:** People who have been exposed to a person who has had direct exposure to a positive case. These people are one level removed from the exposure and are therefore considered low risk.

**LOOK BACK:** Once a positive case is identified, contact tracers look back 48 hours before symptoms began or before the date of the positive test to determine who the contacts of the case are.

**ISOLATION:** Individuals who **test positive for COVID 19 are instructed to isolate themselves at home for 10 days** from the beginning of symptoms or from the positive test date. Isolation means staying in a separate room, using a separate bathroom and eating separately from the rest of the household.

**QUARANTINE:** Individuals who are identified as direct contacts are quarantined for **14 days from the last date of exposure**. Due to the long incubation time for COVID 19, symptoms can appear anytime in that 14 day window. The quarantine time is longer than isolation time for the same reason.

**24 DAY QUARANTINE:** In some situations, isolation of a positive case is not possible due to lack of space or the needs of the people involved (i.e. young children). If a positive individual

cannot isolate themselves from the rest of the household, the exposed members of the household have an **extended quarantine through the isolation period and then extending 14 more days past the last day of the isolation for a total of 24 days..**

**TESTING:** There are two basic types of testing, rapid antigen tests and PCR tests. PCR tests are the gold standard for testing because the results are the most reliable, but results can take days to come back. Rapid tests give results quickly and are reliable when results are positive. Negative rapid test results are not reliable and require followup with a PCR test. Testing does not have any effect on quarantines. Even a negative test result does not shorten the required 14 day length of quarantine.

**Please keep in mind that each contact tracing situation is different and the number of people quarantined is determined by the individual situation. For example, it may be necessary to quarantine a larger number of people in an elementary setting where a group of people have spent several hours together. Older students tend to have a shorter period of time in one setting and can be expected to stay in their assigned seats. On buses, videos allow us to identify which students are sitting near a positive case on any given day. In cases where the person was not in school prior to developing symptoms, there may be no contacts at school.**

**Please continue to keep the school nurses informed of positive COVID test results during the remote learning period. We will continue to track cases within the school community as we learn of them.**

**I hope that this is helpful information for all. The goal of contact tracing is to keep everyone safer by controlling the spread of infection. It is admittedly an inexact tool, but it is the best way that we have at the moment to protect our community.**

**Stay safe. Be well.**

**Anne Dalton,RN, BSN  
Newtown Nursing Supervisor**