School COVID-19 Case Response

Toolkit

Find resources and stay updated at tpchd.org/covidinfoschools.
How to use

Schools should use this toolkit in conjunction with your Reopening Plan. Your plan must include procedures to report COVID-19 cases. Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department will work with Pierce County schools—public and private—to help schools manage contact tracing, positive cases and outbreaks. Use this guide as a planning framework for your response.

Helpful links

**COVID-19 information for schools**
tpchd.org/covidinfoschools

**Face masks and coverings**
tpchd.org/mask

**Practice safe six**
tpchd.org/safesix

**Washington State Department of Health K-12 Schools—Fall 2020-2021 Guidance**
doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/1600/coronavirus/FallGuidanceK-12.pdf

**OSPI Decision Tree for Provision of In-Person Learning**
doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/1600/coronavirus/DecisionTree-K12schools.pdf

**Reopening Washington Schools 2020 District Planning Guide**

**CDC Operating schools during COVID-19**
cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/schools.html

Report a case

Report online.

Questions?

Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department
(253) 798-6410
## Roles and Responsibilities

### Building COVID-19 Safety Coordinator(s)

- Share COVID-19 procedures and information for building.
- Report suspected or confirmed COVID-19 cases to the District COVID-19 Coordinator.
- Work with Building Response Team (custodian, nurse, admin) to respond to a COVID-19 case.
- Provide contact lists to District COVID-19 Safety Coordinator.
- Monitor return to school for confirmed cases and people who have been quarantined.

### District COVID-19 Safety Coordinator(s)

- Develop communication and response procedures. Distribute to the Building COVID-19 Safety Coordinator.
- Ensure training and knowledge of policies and procedures among Building COVID-19 Safety Coordinators.
- Report COVID-19 cases to and review response procedures with Health Department COVID-19 School Team.
- Work with the Building COVID-19 Safety Coordinator to identify and communicate with close contacts.
- Coordinate communications between Health Department COVID-19 School Team and school administration for decision making (for example, closure).
- Coordinate with District Communications Office.

### Health Department COVID-19 School Team

- Work with District COVID-19 Coordinator on procedures and case reporting.
- Case investigation and contact tracing with students and staff positive for COVID-19.
- Provide education and support for COVID-19 mitigation strategies and best practices.
School COVID-19 Case Response
Interim Guidance

Confirmed or Suspected COVID-19 Cases Flowchart

Staff or student:

Gets tested.

Shows symptoms at school.

Building COVID-19 Safety Coordinator(s)
Find out why person was tested.
- Close contact.
- Symptoms.
- Other—pre-procedure, random, required, etc.

District COVID-19 Safety Coordinator(s)
- Coordinate notification calls and letters.
- Send close contact list to Health Department COVID-19 School Team.

Health Department
- Check in with close contacts.
- Arrange tests if needed.
- Provide resources to help isolate or quarantine.
- Keep District and Building COVID-19 Safety Coordinators updated.

Building COVID-19 Safety Coordinator(s)
Have building response team:
- Use personal protective equipment.
- Close off area.
- Disinfect surfaces.

Refer sick person for testing.

Sick people and close contacts waiting for test results should stay home.

Test result is:

Positive

Building COVID-19 Safety Coordinator(s)
- Work with Health Department to determine infectious period: 2 days before symptoms started.
- Gather list of close contacts. Send to District COVID-19 Safety Coordinator.

District COVID-19 Safety Coordinator(s)
- Coordinate notification calls and letters.
- Send close contact list to Health Department COVID-19 School Team.

Negative

- No symptoms.
- Close contact to positive COVID-19 case.

Stay home for 14 days.

- No symptoms.
- No close contact.

May return to school.

- Symptoms.
- No close contact.

May return to school 24 hours after fever and symptoms improve.

- Symptoms.
- Close contact to positive COVID-19 case.

Stay home for 10 days after symptoms start and 24 hours after fever and symptoms improve.

Confirmed or Suspected COVID-19 Cases Flowchart
Communication Plan

Program/Initiative Name
Owner Name

Situation Analysis
Brief overview of the situation and what you’re trying to achieve. Include facts and data.

Risk Analysis (SWOT)

Strengths
• Your resources and experience.
• How people will benefit.
Weaknesses
• Disadvantages you face.
• Obstacles you must overcome.
Opportunities
• Potential good outcomes.
Threats
• Potential bad outcomes.

Communication Goals
• What you’re trying to achieve (vision statement).

Target Audiences
• Groups with whom you will communicate.
• Commonly overlooked target audiences: staff, Board of Health, Pierce County legislators.

Target Audience: Name

Strategic Communication Objectives
• Actions you will take to accomplish your Communication Goals.

Key Messages
• Words you will use to accomplish your Strategic Communication Objectives.

Tactics
• Ways you will deploy your Key Messages.

Timeline
Important events, due dates and other activities helpful for tracking progress.

Budget
Estimated costs for tactics (materials, advertising, etc.), This number is helpful for planning.

Putting together a Communication Plan is a lot like putting together a puzzle.

First, create the pieces—Brainstorm. Write down what you know, your ideas and your questions.

Next, work with the pieces—Move them around. See where they fit best.

Just like a puzzle, the farther you get, the clearer it will become which pieces go where, which pieces go together and which pieces are missing.

Need help, input, feedback, inspiration? Talk to your Communication Liaison. We’re here for you!
Dear [SCHOOL NAME] Parents:

[A PERSON OR PEOPLE] in your child’s class [HAS OR HAVE] tested positive for COVID-19 and your child was a close contact of this person. A close contact has spent 15 or more minutes within 6 feet of the confirmed case.

Your child should stay home for 14 days past the date of exposure. Your child should not go to school or participate in any activities during this time. If you choose to have your child tested before your child experiences any symptoms and the test is negative, you must still follow the request to quarantine for the entire 14-day period.

Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department provided a letter that the school district emailed directly to you. The letter provides guidance on symptoms to watch for and when to contact a healthcare provider. Expect to hear from the Health Department to review instructions and answer your questions. They will also request you respond to automated messages to keep them informed of any changes in your child’s condition.

COVID-19 transmission remains widespread in Pierce County. The Health Department asks for your continued support to help slow the spread:

- Wear a mask when you leave home, especially when you can’t maintain 6 feet of space from others.
- Stay close to home.
- Limit interactions to a small group of family and friends.

Learn more at tpchd.org/coronavirus.
No exposure from case or cases in a class robocall

Dear [SCHOOL NAME] Parents:

[A PERSON OR PEOPLE] in your child's class [HAS OR HAVE] tested positive for COVID-19. After our investigation, we don't think your child was exposed. The [PERSON OR PEOPLE] who tested positive will not be able to return to class until after the contagious period has passed—10 days after the start of symptoms and 24 hours after fever and symptoms improve.

If your child develops symptoms, contact your healthcare provider and ask that your child receive testing for COVID-19. Symptoms—fever, cough, headache, body aches, diarrhea and nausea/vomiting—develop on average 5 days after exposure but can appear 2-14 days after exposure.

COVID-19 transmission remains widespread in Pierce County. The Health Department asks for your continued support to help slow the spread:

- Wear a mask when you leave home, especially when you can’t maintain 6 feet of space from others.
- Stay close to home.
- Limit interactions to a small group of family and friends.

Learn more at tpchd.org/coronavirus.
Dear [SCHOOL NAME] Parents:

We must temporarily close to protect the health of our students and staff because of several COVID-19 cases at our school. We understand this may be a hardship for families and is disruptive to student learning. The health and safety of our students and staff must come first.

We are working with Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department to investigate the cases and are consulting published guidance from Washington State Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

If your child is a close contact—spent 15 or more minutes within 6 feet of the confirmed case—you will receive a letter from the district and a call from the Health Department with special instructions.

We will keep you informed about our progress to reopen school as soon and safely as possible.

COVID-19 transmission remains widespread in Pierce County. The Health Department asks for your continued support to help slow the spread:

- Wear a mask when you leave home, especially when you can't maintain 6 feet of space from others.
- Stay close to home.
- Limit interactions to a small group of family and friends.

Learn more at tpchd.org/coronavirus.
Notification of exposure letter

Download editable file on tpchd.org/covidinfoschools. Also available in Spanish.

[DISTRICT/SCHOOL LETTERHEAD]

[DATE]

Dear Parent:

Someone at [NAME OF SCHOOL OR FACILITY] has been diagnosed with COVID-19, and your child was a close contact of this person. A close contact has spent 15 or more minutes within 6 feet of the confirmed case.

Your child should stay home for a total of 14 days past the date of exposure, [DATE]. Your child should not participate in any other visits or activities during this time. If you choose to have your child tested before your child experiences any symptoms and the test is negative, you must still follow the request to quarantine for the entire 14-day period.

The symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, cough, headache, body aches, diarrhea, nausea and vomiting. Some people have no symptoms at all, or the symptoms are so mild that they are not noticed. Some experience serious illness. If symptoms develop, the average time after exposure is about 5 days, but symptoms can appear anywhere between 2 and 14 days after exposure (the incubation period).

If your child develops any of the symptoms above, please contact your health care provider and request the child be tested for COVID-19. It’s best to request testing if your child shows symptoms as the test is for active COVID-19. Your child could still experience symptoms during 14-day incubation period. These providers offer COVID-19 testing: tpchd.org/covidtest.

Please expect to hear from one of our staff members to review these instructions and to answer any questions you may have. They will also request you to respond to automated messages to keep us informed of any changes in your child’s condition.

How can you help get our students back to their school buildings?

Everyone has a role and should take these steps to protect the people you care about:

- Stay close to home.
- Wear a mask when you leave home.
- Limit your interactions to a small circle of friends and family.
- Keep gatherings small, and outside if possible where fresh air circulates.
- Stay 6 feet apart from others. Wear a mask when you cannot maintain 6 feet of space.
- Get tested for COVID-19 if you are experiencing symptoms, belong to a group that is disproportionately affected (Black, Latinx, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Island, American Indian, Alaska Native)—or have participated in any gatherings social, civic, business, political, athletic or otherwise.
- Wash your hands, cover your cough, and keep up your best hygiene and sanitation.

Schools are a vital part of our community—let’s do our part to support them during these challenging times.

For more information about COVID-19, visit tpchd.org/coronavirus.
Notification of no exposure letter

Download editable file on tpchd.org/covidinfoschools. Also available in Spanish.

[DISTRICT/SCHOOL LETTERHEAD]

[DATE]

Dear Parents and Staff:

Someone at [NAME OF SCHOOL OR FACILITY] has been diagnosed with COVID-19. After investigating the situation, we do not think you/your child was exposed to the person. The person who tested positive will not be able to return to the school or facility until after the contagious period has passed (10 days after the start of symptoms). The purpose of this letter is to notify you of the situation and to remind everyone of prevention measures.

The symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, cough, headache, body aches, diarrhea, nausea and vomiting. Some people have no symptoms at all, or the symptoms are so mild that they are not noticed. Some experience serious illness. If symptoms develop, the average time after exposure is about 5 days, but symptoms can appear anywhere between 2 and 14 days after exposure (the incubation period).

If your child develops any of the symptoms above, please contact your health care provider and request the child be tested for COVID-19. It’s best to request testing if your child shows symptoms as the test is for active COVID-19. Your child could still experience symptoms during 14-day incubation period. These providers offer COVID-19 testing: tpchd.org/covidtest.

As our county moves toward re-opening, we may be more at risk for this infection. Please do everything you can when you are in public to keep a physical distance of at least 6 feet, wear masks in public and sanitize and wash hands frequently (adults and children). Workers should maintain physical distance of at least 6 feet from other workers and work only with their assigned classroom. Staying in well-defined groups and not mixing children groups or workers is important to prevent the spread of illness should someone in any of the groups become sick.

How can you help get our students back to their school buildings?

Everyone has a role and should take these steps to protect the people you care about:

- Stay close to home.
- Wear a mask when you leave home.
- Limit your interactions to a small circle of friends and family.
- Keep gatherings small, and outside if possible where fresh air circulates.
- Stay 6 feet apart from others. Wear a mask when you cannot maintain 6 feet of space.
- Get tested for COVID-19 if you are experiencing symptoms, belong to a group that is disproportionately affected (Black, Latinx, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Island, American Indian, Alaska Native)—or have participated in any gatherings social, civic, business, political, athletic or otherwise.
- Wash your hands, cover your cough, and keep up your best hygiene and sanitation.

Schools are a vital part of our community—let’s do our part to support them during these challenging times.

For more information about COVID-19, visit tpchd.org/coronavirus.
School COVID-19 Case Response
Interim Guidance

School closure letter
Download editable file on tpchd.org/covidinfoschools. Also available in Spanish.

[DISTRICT/SCHOOL LETTERHEAD]

[DATE]

Dear Parents:

The health and safety of our students is our priority. We must temporarily close to protect the health of our students and staff because of several COVID-19 cases at our school. We understand this may be a hardship for families and is disruptive to student learning. The health and safety of our students and staff must come first. We are working with Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department to investigate the cases and are consulting published guidance from Washington State Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

If your child was a close contact of a confirmed case, we will notify you with special instructions to keep your child home from all activities, including visiting friends and shopping.

[Discuss a potential timeline for reopening, if decided a date.] We don’t have a date to reopen the school. We will consult with the Health Department to determine a reopening date and will let you know immediately by [METHOD: robocall, website, email].

[Briefly discuss plan for continuity of education.]

Even if your child was not identified as a close contact, you should watch for signs and symptoms of COVID-19. These include fever, cough, headache, body aches, diarrhea, nausea and vomiting. Some people have mild to no symptoms. Some experience serious illness. The average time after exposure to develop symptoms is about 5 days, but symptoms can appear anywhere between 2 and 14 days after exposure (the incubation period).

If your child develops any COVID-19 symptoms, contact your health care provider and request the child be tested for COVID-19. Find COVID-19 testing sites: tpchd.org/covidtest.

The pandemic may last many more months. Your actions will affect how well our community prevents the spread of the virus. Everyone should take these steps:

- Stay close to home.
- Wear a mask when you leave home.
- Limit your interactions to a small circle of friends and family.
- Keep gatherings small, and outside if possible where fresh air circulates.
- Stay 6 feet apart from others. Wear a mask when you cannot maintain 6 feet of space.
- Get tested for COVID-19 if you are experiencing symptoms, belong to a group that is disproportionately affected (Black, Latinx, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Island, American Indian, Alaska Native)—or have participated in any gatherings social, civic, business, political, athletic or otherwise.
- Wash your hands, cover your cough, and keep up your best hygiene and sanitation.

For more information about COVID-19, visit tpchd.org/coronavirus.
What if student or staff member has COVID-19 symptoms?

School
- Send sick person home.
- Record date school found out and sent person home.

Sick person
Get tested. Find testing information at tpchd.org/covidtest.

Test is negative.
See page 15.

Sick person doesn’t get tested.
See page 16.

Test is positive.
See page 5.
What if a healthy student or staff member is a close contact of a person with COVID-19?

**Close contacts** include people the person with COVID-19:
- Lives with—like siblings.
- Is within 6 feet of for more than 15 minutes—like on the bus.

---

School

- Send close contact home.
- Record date school found out and sent person home.

---

Does close contact live in the same household as person with COVID-19?

**Yes**

Everyone who lives with sick person is a close contact.

**Close contacts**

Stay home for 14 days after close contact with COVID-19 case. May be longer if:
- Other people they live with get sick.
- They can’t avoid close contact with sick person.

**People who live with close contact**

May go to school if they were not in close contact with COVID-19 case.

---

**No**

Stay home for 14 days after close contact with COVID-19 case.
What if sick student or staff member tests negative for COVID-19?

Was the sick person a close contact of someone with COVID-19 in the past 14 days?

- Yes
  - Health Department
    - Confirm sick person was in close contact with COVID-19 case.
    - Review cases and cohort logs.
    - Identify and tell close contacts to stay home.
  - Sick person
    - Send sick person home.
- No
  - Health Department
    - Sick person
      - Sick person is considered a probable case. Stay home for:
        - 14 days after close contact with COVID-19 case.
        - 10 days after symptoms start.
        - 24 hours after fever symptoms improve. Must improve without medicine to reduce fever.
  - Close contacts
    - May go to school.
  - Sick person
    - Isolate at home until 24 hours after fever symptoms improve. Must improve without medicine to reduce fever.
What if sick student or staff member does not get tested?

Was the sick person a close contact of someone with COVID-19?

- Yes
  - Does sick person have a clear, non-respiratory alternative diagnosis from a healthcare provider?
    - Yes
      - School: Assume sick person has COVID-19 because of close contact.
      - Send sick person home.
      - Alert Health Department and provide list of close contacts.
      - Work with Health Department and notify cohort if they need to stay home for 14 days.
    - No
      - School: Assume sick person doesn’t have COVID-19 because of alternative diagnosis.
      - Send sick person home.
      - Follow suspect case guideline. See “Show symptoms at school” on page 5.

- No
  - Does sick person have a clear, non-respiratory alternative diagnosis from a healthcare provider?
    - Yes
      - School: Send sick person home.
    - No
      - School: Follow guidance specific to disease to return to school.

Sick person: Stay home for:
- 14 days after close contact with COVID-19 case.
- 10 days after symptoms start.
- 24 hours after fever symptoms improve. Must improve without medicine to reduce fever.

Health Department: Confirm sick person was in close contact with COVID-19 case.
- Review cases and cohort logs.
- Identify and tell close contacts to stay home.

Close contacts: May go to school.

If sick person cannot or will not get tested, call Health Department for guidance.
**What if 2 or more students or staff members test positive for COVID-19 within 14 days?**

### School
- Send sick person home.
- Alert Health Department and provide list of close contacts.
- Work with Health Department and notify cohort if they need to stay home for 14 days.

### Health Department
Investigate and coordinate outbreak response.

### Is there likely transmission at school?

- **Yes**
  - School and Health Department will coordinate response if more than 1 classroom is affected by multiple cases.
  - Consider school closure and remote learning for 14 days if:
    - 2 or more classrooms are dismissed due to outbreaks in schools with 10 or fewer classrooms.
    - 10% or more of classrooms are dismissed due to outbreaks in schools with more than 10 classrooms.
    - School cannot function due to insufficient teaching or support staff.

- **No**
  - Identify and tell close contacts to stay home.
Wash your hands.

tpchd.org/coronavirus
Be a Germ-Buster...

WASH YOUR HANDS!

1. WET
2. SOAP
3. WASH
4. RINSE
5. DRY
6. TURN OFF WATER WITH PAPER TOWEL
Hands that look clean can still have icky germs!

Wash your hands!

1. Wet
2. Get Soap
3. Scrub
4. Rinse
5. Dry

[cdc.gov/coronavirus]
Students: Let’s work together to stop the spread of COVID-19

DID YOU WASH YOUR HANDS?

stop

ASK YOURSELF:

Did I just go to the bathroom?

Am I about to eat?

Did I just eat?

Did I cough or sneeze?

Did I touch supplies or objects that other people have touched?

Did I touch garbage?

Did I touch my cloth face cover?

think

wash hands

If you can’t wash your hands, ask your teacher or another adult for hand sanitizer.

cdc.gov/coronavirus
Handwashing is your superpower!

Fight off germs!

Wash your hands!

cdc.gov/coronavirus
GERMS
are all around you.

Stay healthy.
Wash your hands.

cdc.gov/coronavirus
Cover your coughs and sneezes.

tpchd.org/coronavirus
Stay home if you’re sick.

tpchd.org/coronavirus
Practice healthy habits.

Stay home if you are sick.
Learn more about COVID-19 at tpchd.org/coronavirus.

- Don’t stand in groups.
- Keep 6 feet between people.
CLASS RULES

- stay home if you feel sick
- keep 6 ft from others
- use hand sanitizer if you can’t wash your hands
- wash your hands with soap and water
- cough or sneeze into a tissue or use your elbow, clean your hands after.

OTHER CLASS RULES

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

CDC 
cdc.gov/coronavirus
Stop the spread of germs that can make you and others sick!

- Wash your hands often
- Wear a mask
- Cover your coughs and sneezes
- Keep 6 feet of space between you and your friends

[cdc.gov/coronavirus]
Clean and Disinfect for COVID-19

How do I clean and disinfect?

Put on disposable gloves. Throw them away when you’re done.

First, clean to remove dirt. Use soap and water to remove dirt and some germs.

Next, disinfect to kill germs. Disinfectants need different times to work. Follow the directions on the label.

Throw away gloves and wash your hands. Scrub hands for 20 seconds with soap and warm water.

What should I use?

Products with EPA-approved emerging viral pathogen claims.

Products with at least 70% alcohol solutions.

Mix 4 teaspoons bleach with 1 quart of water.

How often should I clean and disinfect?

1-3 times a day

Bathrooms, kitchens and surfaces people touch often.
Like light switches, remotes, door handles, phones and toys. Put away toys that are hard to clean.

Weekly

Sleeping areas. Clean and disinfect more often when dirty or between people.

Keep your family healthy. Learn more at tpchd.org/coronavirus.