



**AppHealthCare**  
Appalachian District Health Department  
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*Caring for our Community*

November 9, 2021

Dear Ashe County School partners,

In response to the decision made by the Ashe County Board of Education Monday, November 1, 2021 to move to a mask optional environment for middle and high school students November 8, 2021 and K-6 students November 29, 2021, we have updated control measures in keeping with the NC DHHS Strong Schools Toolkit and current CDC guidance regarding quarantine.

Effective immediately, students who are exposed to a known positive COVID-19 case in a mask optional environment will be asked to quarantine for 14 days from their last exposure. Reduced quarantine options are no longer applicable in a mask optional environment given the fact that Ashe County is currently in an area of [high transmission](#) and there is insufficient space for consistent social distancing and no policy for consistent mask wearing or method to ensure consistent compliance. Students who are participating in the test-to-stay study are allowed to continue to follow the established guidelines for that study as long as a mask required environment is in place.

According to the [NC DHHS Strong Schools Toolkit](#) and current [CDC guidance](#):

*If quarantine is discontinued before day 14, the individual should continue to monitor symptoms and strictly adhere to all non-pharmaceutical interventions (e.g. wear a mask, practice social distancing) through 14 days after the date of last exposure.*

Staff members may receive reduced quarantine options if they have no symptoms during daily self-monitoring and agree to adhere to wearing a mask and social distancing while at work. To return on day 8, staff members must have no symptoms and receive a negative lab confirmed test result no earlier than day 5 after their last exposure. Alternatively, staff members may return on day 11 after their last exposure if they have had no symptoms.

Individuals who have been fully vaccinated, with at least 2 weeks after receiving their second dose, will not be asked to quarantine, but will be asked to monitor for symptoms and be tested day 5-7 after their exposure, even if they don't have symptoms and wear a mask at school for the 14 days following exposure or until they receive a negative test result.

Additionally, individuals who have a previously lab confirmed positive COVID-19 test result in the prior three months will not be asked to quarantine.

We will continue to monitor current case trends and emerging evidence over the coming weeks as we see more children have the opportunity to be fully immunized by mid-December. Please reach out if you have any questions or would like further discussion.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Greene, MPH, Health Director

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