



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

August 25, 2021

Dear school partners,

I know we wish we were in a new place this school year. Your work during the past school year and present has been absolutely incredible. Thanks to your leadership and that of the school health team, school administrators, and so many school faculty and staff, we have worked together to slow the spread of this terrible virus and prevented transmission in school.

As we continue to collaborate in response and prevention efforts, I wanted to reiterate my thanks in the support your team has shown in supporting the investigation of positive COVID-19 cases and the implementation of control measures as we have directed.

Since we understand that there is some public discourse around the virus itself and we understand there could be some confusion about the importance of complying to directives to remain out of school when someone has tested positive or has been exposed to a known positive COVID-19 case, we wanted to just reiterate our support and thanks for your efforts. To clarify, the public health director, has authority to implement control measures to prevent the spread of infectious disease, including COVID-19.

For your reference, here is a reference to this authority according to state law:

- Under state law (G.S. [130A-144](#) and [130A-145](#)), local health directors and the state health director have the authority to give control measures, including issuing isolation and quarantine orders, to prevent the spread of COVID-19 or any other communicable disease posing a significant threat to the public health. Control measures are to be given as prescribed by the Commission for Public Health in rule. The general control measure rule ([10A NCAC 41A .0201](#)) aligns control measures with “guidelines and recommended actions” published by the CDC. The quarantine and isolation guidance in the NC DHHS [StrongSchools Toolkit](#) reflects current control measure guidelines and recommendations from the CDC.

We maintain that we want to be cautious in our approach, use the most current guidance, and also balance the burden of compliance with control measures by using the most appropriate means for isolation and quarantine. Currently, these control measures are most often communicated through written or verbal guidance, but we may issue written isolation or quarantine orders in situations where we fear public health is at risk or there is known non-compliance.

According to the [NC DHHS Strong Schools Toolkit](#), and current CDC guidance, 14 days of quarantine after the last known exposure to a positive case is directed.

However, if approved by the Health Director, this quarantine may be reduced for individuals who are exposed but have no symptoms to 10 days after the last known exposure to a positive case or 7 days after the last known exposure to a positive case and a negative test result has been received from a test

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conducted no earlier than day 5 after the last exposure. These reduced quarantine options are only applicable to situations in which mask wearing is consistent for a full 14 days and the exposed individual has no symptoms. In addition, physical distancing to the greatest extent possible should continue for the full 14 days. This means that the reduced quarantine options will not apply to participation in school athletics since social distancing is not possible and therefore will still require abstaining from these activities for a full 14 days. The only instance in which this may differ is if the student exposed is vaccinated and has no symptoms, and if this occurs, we still recommend testing 3-5 days after the last known exposure.

The good news is that any classroom or transportation related exposure occurring at school when both students (positive case and exposed) are wearing masks consistently, we do not have to quarantine the exposed student. The same is true if the exposed student is vaccinated, however, we strongly recommend that student be tested 3-5 days after their last known exposure and continue to wear a mask until a negative test result is obtained or 14 days have passed. Unfortunately, this does not apply in exposures that occur in school athletics, extracurricular activities, or home related exposures unless a student is fully vaccinated. It also does not apply to adults.

Our case investigation team focused on school health will gladly support clarification and also support referring back to you for any additional employer related guidance you wish to provide about return to work policies that may apply.

In short, we understand tensions are rising around this topic, and we are grateful to you for being steadfast in your support for school health and our community's health by helping to communicate our control measures.

By working together to promote prevention measures like wearing masks indoors for all persons at school, regardless of vaccination status and encouraging everyone who is able to be vaccinated, we will further protect more people and slow the spread of this virus. Sadly, our health district has had 8,801 lives impacted by this virus and has lost 87 people from COVID-19. Those people are not just numbers, but individuals whose lives were important parts of our community. I fear the numbers would be much higher had we not already worked closely together. Let's continue to honor those fighting long COVID, those in our memory lost to COVID as well as others we want to protect in our community by sticking together to promote our public health measures.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Greene, MPH  
Health Director

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