

COVID SAFETY

2021 - 2022

Penn-Delco School District

Penn Delco Health and Safety Q & A December 15, 2022

- **What do I do if I have a special needs student who is unable to consistently wear their mask properly and is identified as a close contact?**

If a student with complex needs who struggles to wear a mask is identified as a close contact but is unable to consistently wear a mask properly (which is a requirement of participation in Test-to-Stay) the student can participate in Test-to-Stay if the parent agrees to bring the child in for a rapid test each morning for the duration of the required quarantining period as determined by the nurse.

- **Am I expected to separate or segregate students based on parental requests around masking?**

No. The Penn Delco Health and Safety plan does not permit teachers to segregate students based on personal mask preferences.

- **If a student asks why I wear a mask, what am I permitted to say without offending parental beliefs?**

Honesty and accuracy is best. Staff may note that you are wearing a mask because you want to reduce the chance of getting sick, and since it is recommended by the district and the PA Department of Health, you will follow the recommendation.

- **If a student comes to a nurses office without a mask and is symptomatic, can we require the student to put a mask on?**

No, but you can recommend they put one on to protect others around them. In addition, you can put them in a quarantine cubicle.

- **Can we tell staff a student is participating in Test-to-Stay?**

Because of confidentiality, communication should be made only to specific and affected teachers and note that the named student will be required to wear a mask from a specific date to another specific date. Please notify the school nurse and/or administrator if the child continues to not wear their mask as required.

- **Do parent volunteers have to wear a mask?**

It is recommended that parent volunteers wear a mask but they are not required to do so. Parent volunteers are currently not able to volunteer inside individual classrooms.

- **How can staff respond to a parent who expects the teacher/school personnel to make sure their child is wearing a mask?**

School personnel cannot guarantee or be expected to continually monitor the use of masks by children based on parental requests. The best that teachers can do is remind all students that masks are recommended and they should be following what their parents requested them to do around mask wearing. Staff can indicate that they will offer classwide reminders but cannot guarantee that amidst supervision of an entire class, they can always ensure that a child follows a parental request. If this is important to parents, we will ask that they remind their own children to follow their expectations.

- **What are the employee testing procedures?**

The district can provide testing for asymptomatic staff who are close contacts. If they are close contacts in school and unvaccinated, they are eligible to participate in Test-to-Stay. If they are close contacts in school and vaccinated, it is recommended that they are tested 5-7 days after exposure and the nurse can provide access to that testing. If a staff member is a close contact outside of school the district can also provide testing. PDSD will continue to provide testing to vaccinated employees who have out of school close contacts 5-7 days after exposure. For unvaccinated staff members, we will provide testing under Test to Stay as long as the District has the capacity to do so.

Given the current national nursing and medical staffing shortages, we are trying to keep as many staff in their work assignments as we can while using the testing protocols at our disposal. All requests for testing of employees following a close contact will come from an email by Nina Tyre or Amy Bell to the school nurse.

- **Will testing be provided to a symptomatic staff member who is already in the building at the time they become symptomatic?**

We are providing testing for symptomatic staff if they are already in the building at the time they become symptomatic. Additionally, if a symptomatic employee needs a second rapid test 48 hours after a first negative rapid test and is unable to get access to a PCR we can provide the second rapid test. Requests for symptomatic testing should come from Nina Tyre or Amy Bell to the school nurse.

- **Can we provide testing to vaccinated, concerned employees who may not be identified as a close contact, but are concerned they may have been?**

Currently we cannot provide assurance testing for vaccinated employees or for employees who are concerned about a specific situation. For example, an employee who might have had non-close contact with someone who is positive or a vaccinated employee who has a concern because of a lack of masking in schools, these situations would demand testing. Please understand that the volume of current and potential testing activity by our nursing staff is extreme. We cannot provide casual assurance testing at this time due to increased demand for testing through Test-to-Stay and limited nursing resources.

- **Will unvaccinated employees be able to do weekly assurance testing?**

We can only continue to do weekly assurance testing for employees who are unvaccinated. These employees should have already signed up with a building nurse to be put on a regular schedule. If an unvaccinated employee would like to begin weekly assurance testing at this time, they can do so by signing up with the school nurse. If the employee does not show up as expected they can be removed from the program. The district continues to support the call from public health experts indicating that adults take advantage of opportunities to become vaccinated.

- **Can I require students in classes such as music/chorus and musical performances to wear a mask?**

Masks are recommended. The Health and Safety Plan suggests adding other mitigation efforts when possible. For instance, create additional distance between students, wear shields, face students in the same direction, have students sing away from one another. The standard rule applies, when one level of mitigation is removed, consider adding another.

- **What are the testing/quarantining rules now that students are not wearing masks?**

Fully vaccinated individuals identified as close contacts are NOT required to quarantine if they do not have symptoms and have not tested positive. A test is recommended between days 5-7 following exposure.

Fully vaccinated individuals are:

- Those who have received both vaccines in a 2 shot series AND has been two weeks since receiving second dose
- OR
- Those who have received one shot in a single shot series AND has been two weeks since receiving dose.

- **The district is currently following the PA Department of Health regarding quarantine and close contact guidance. As such, our guidance is as follows:**

If a student tests COVID+ and has been in school while infectious, they are required to quarantine.

- **The guidelines for identifying close contacts between STUDENTS are:**
 - If the COVID+ student **WAS NOT masked**, anyone within a 6 foot distance for greater than 15 consecutive minutes (regardless of mask use) is considered a close contact. These students will be eligible for Test-to-Stay if not fully vaccinated.
 - If the COVID+ student **WAS masked**, anyone WITHOUT a mask within a 6 foot distance for greater than 15 consecutive minutes is considered a close contact. If these students are not fully vaccinated, they are eligible for the Test-to-Stay program.
 - If the COVID+ student **WAS masked**, anyone WITH A MASK OUTSIDE a 3 foot distance is NOT considered a close contact. They do not need to quarantine regardless of vaccination status.

Please keep in mind that the above is for STUDENT TO STUDENT contact only.

- **Student to teacher contact tracing is as follows:**
 - If a teacher is COVID+, any unvaccinated student within a 6 foot distance for greater than 15 consecutive minutes, REGARDLESS of mask use, is considered a close contact. These students would be eligible for Test-to-Stay. This situation also works in reverse if a teacher is exposed to a COVID+ student and was within 6 feet for greater than 15 consecutive minutes. These individuals are also eligible for Test-to-Stay.

- **When do we contact trace?**

We contact trace for COVID positive students based on whether they were in school while infectious. COVID positive persons are known to have symptoms ranging from mild to severe, or even none at all. Individuals are considered infectious:

- 48 hours prior to symptoms onset, or
- 48 hours prior to a positive test if no symptoms are present.

- **Can we still teach in small groups?**

Small group instruction can still occur and employees should continue to maintain a distance of 6 feet from students whenever possible.

- **What are the distancing rules now that masks are recommended?**

A close contact for unmasked students is any unmasked student who is within 6 feet or less for 15 consecutive minutes. Distancing is a minimum of 3 feet and 6 feet to the greatest extent possible.

Reminders:

- Staff should continue to maintain a distance of 6 feet from students whenever possible.
- Staff should revert to district script on masking questions: In the Penn Delco School District, masks are currently recommended.
- Staff are not expected to segregate students on the basis of masking.
- Staff are not expected to monitor and police the mask decisions of students. Staff may make frequent reminders, especially for elementary aged students, of the recommendation and reference to general requests of their parents.