



COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO HEALTH AGENCY
PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT
MEMORANDUM

To: All SLO County Residents
From: Dr. Penny Borenstein, County Public Health Officer
Date: October 9, 2020
Subject: COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions Regarding K-12 In-Person Instruction

Summary

According to the [California Department of Public Health \(CDPH\)](#), now that San Luis Obispo County has been in the red tier for longer than two weeks, K-12 schools can reopen for in-person instruction. Schools and school districts must follow [these guidelines](#) and submit a reopening plan to SLO County Public Health Department to reopen. Even if SLO County moves back into the purple tier, schools may remain open, but may have other metrics to track and follow.

It is important to note, however, that schools may close intermittently, or classes may be required to quarantine if confirmed COVID-19 cases occur. Read below to understand what this means for you and your family.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Does my child have to return to in-person education?

No. Under [CDPH guidance](#), schools must offer distance learning based on the unique circumstances of each student who would be put at risk by in-person instruction. CDPH provides the following examples of when distance learning should be offered to a student: students with a health condition, students with family members with a health condition, students who live with or regularly interact with high-risk individuals, and students who are otherwise identified as “at-risk” by a parent or guardian.

According to the California Department of Education, schools are not required to ask for documentation from families to verify that a request to participate in distance learning meets a specific standard.

2. Do I have to decide for the whole year?

Schools/districts are offering various options for the school year. Refer to your school’s reopening plan to best understand the options for you and your family in returning to in-person education or remaining virtual.

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3. What does a school need to do to reopen?

Each school that reopens has their own tailored guidelines for their school/district (based on the State's School Reopening Framework) and will have completed a review and consultation of their plan by SLO County Public Health. Please contact your district for information regarding their reopening plans or visit <https://www.emergencyslo.org/en/schools> for more COVID-19 information and a listing of school districts.

4. How often will testing occur for the teachers at the school? Will I be required to have my child tested and how often?

[State guidance](#) requires that school staff (e.g. teachers, paraprofessionals, cafeteria workers, janitors, bus drivers) be tested periodically for COVID-19. Examples of recommended frequency include all staff being tested over 2 months, where 25% of staff are tested every 2 weeks, or 50% every month to rotate which staff members are tested over time. Staff testing should be staggered over time instead of occurring all at once. District staff testing plans are listed in the school's/district's reopening plans. Students do not have a testing requirement, at this time.

5. What kind of health screening will take place for students, staff, and other individuals to enter campus?

[State guidance](#) recommends visual wellness and symptom checks prior to individuals entering campus. These checks may happen at home or as the individual enters the campus and include a short list of questions and a temperature check. Follow-up should occur whenever symptoms of COVID-19 are identified. Anyone who exhibits symptoms of COVID-19 or is in close contact with a person diagnosed with COVID-19 will not be allowed on campus. Please refer to your school's reopening plan for additional details regarding their screening process.

6. Can I carpool with children not in my child's classroom?

Carpooling that involves students from more than one household is not recommended. As with close contact in any confined space, carpooling may pose risks in the transmission of COVID-19. If carpooling is necessary for families, the CDC recommends the following precautions to help manage risk:

- Wear masks inside the vehicle
- Circulate fresh air through vents or windows
- Clean and disinfect surfaces often
- Stay six feet apart when outside the vehicle
- Limit the number of people in the car
- Ride with the same consistent cohort
- Cover coughs and sneezes
- Practice proper hand hygiene

7. What will school pick-up and drop-off look like?

Individual school sites will implement pick-up/drop-off procedures to limit the contact between students, families, staff, and the broader community. Parents or caregivers dropping off students will generally be asked to remain in their vehicles. When it is necessary for a parent or caregiver to accompany a student onto campus, only one parent or caregiver should enter the school with the student. Adults entering campus for pick-up or drop-off must wear a cloth face covering.

Please refer to your school's reopening plan for additional details regarding their pick-up/drop-off procedures.

8. How does a sick student, teacher or staff member get cleared to return to school?

If a student, teacher or staff member tests positive for COVID-19, they will be told to remain home under **isolation** orders from Public Health. The order comes in the form of a letter at the start of the illness, followed by a letter releasing the confirmed case from isolation when they are no longer contagious. Both the staff member and the school/school district is notified. In conformance with HIPAA privacy regulations, the student or staff member's name will not be made public.

A positive case is no longer contagious:

- 10 days since symptoms first appeared and
- 24 hours with no fever without the use of fever-reducing medications and
- Other symptoms of COVID-19 have improved

Please refer to your school's reopening plan for additional details regarding this clearance process.

9. Who else needs to act after someone tests positive?

Close contacts of the confirmed case will also be notified by Public Health. A "close contact" is anyone who was exposed to a person with COVID-19 while they were contagious within six feet for 15 minutes or more.

Those who are close contacts of the confirmed case will be told to **quarantine and self-monitor** for 14 days from their last date of exposure, or possibly a longer period of time if they are a household contact. They will also receive a letter from Public Health stating that they are currently being quarantined.

View more details about [the quarantine process](#).

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Possible Exposure Scenarios

- 10. I tested positive for COVID-19. Can I send my child to school?** No. If a family member has tested positive, the child will not be allowed to go to school.
- 11. I was exposed to someone who tested positive for COVID-19. Can I send my child to school?** Yes. If a family member is quarantined, but has not tested positive, the child will be allowed to go to school unless or until the family member in question tests positive. However, if the child is sick with symptoms, the child should stay home from school.
- 12. Will I be notified if there is a positive case at my child's school, even in a different classroom?** You will be notified if your child shared a classroom or an investigation determined they were in close contact to a positive case; however, it may not be necessary to notify parents otherwise.
- 13. Will my entire family need to quarantine if we have one child in a class with a positive case?** No. If your child is a "close contact" of someone who is a confirmed case, your child will need to quarantine at home. During this time, parents should monitor their child for any symptoms. The rest of the family will not need to quarantine, unless or until the child or someone in the household tests positive.
- 14. Will all students in a class need to quarantine if there is a positive case in the class?** Possibly, yes. Students within the same classroom will likely have the level of exposure that would make them a "close contact" of the positive case and therefore will need to quarantine and self-monitor. Decisions regarding which students will be required to quarantine will be made on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the Public Health Department.
- 15. Will I be notified if my child spent time (sports, carpooling, etc.) with a family associated with a positive case?** Maybe. You'll receive a call from a County Public Health contact tracer if your child is suspected to be a "close contact" of the positive case. The contact tracer will inform you of the next steps regarding quarantining and self-monitoring at home.
- 16. If a child in my child's class is quarantined due to an exposure at after-school program, will I be notified?** If your child did not have an exposure to an infected person, your child is not at risk of contracting the virus. Therefore, while some schools may choose to alert families if a student in your child's class is quarantined, it is unnecessary.

17. What do I do if my child is sick?

If your child is sick with COVID-19 symptoms, keep them home. Symptoms of COVID-19 include:

- Fever (temperature \geq 100.4 F)
- Chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

We recognize that many other illnesses share similar symptoms with COVID-19 and understand it is sometimes difficult to discern between COVID-19 symptoms or those that are from the seasonal flu, allergies, etc. We highly urge keeping a child home whenever they are sick.

18. How can I get my child tested?

We recommend that students reach out to their regular health care provider or local urgent care if they are sick and need to be tested. SLO County also has many community testing sites available: www.emergencyslo.org/testing.

Those with symptoms can be tested, as well as anyone who feels they may have been exposed (it's best to wait at least 5 days following exposure for best results).

19. What if my school has an outbreak?

In the case of an outbreak, the school will implement the necessary processes and protocols delineated in their reopening plan, in accordance with [CDPH guidelines](#). The County Public Health Department will work with the school and provide technical consultation.

20. What are the criteria for closing a school?

Individual school closure is recommended based on the number of cases, the percentage of the teacher/students/staff that are positive for COVID-19 and following consultation with the Local Health Officer. Individual school closure may be appropriate when there are multiple cases in multiple cohorts at a school or when at least 5 percent of the total number of teachers/student/staff are cases within a 14-day period, depending on the size and physical layout of the school.

The Local Health Officer may also determine school closure is warranted for other reasons, including results from public health investigation or other local epidemiological data.

21. If a school is closed for in-person learning, when may it reopen?

Schools may typically reopen after 14 days if the following have occurred:

- Cleaning and disinfection
- Public Health investigation
- Consultation with the County Public Health Department

In some circumstances, the school or classroom closure may be much shorter if only cleaning is required.

22. Does my child have to wear a mask at school? What happens to students who refuse to wear masks? Who is exempt from wearing masks?

That depends. [State guidance](#) requires a face covering, as follows:

STUDENTS

Age	Face Covering Requirement
Under 2 years old	No
2 years old – 2nd grade	Strongly encouraged**
3rd grade – High School	Yes, unless exempt

Persons younger than 2 years old, anyone who has trouble breathing, anyone who is unconscious or incapacitated, and anyone who is otherwise unable to remove the face covering without assistance *are exempt* from wearing a face covering.

A cloth face covering or a face shield should be removed for meals, snacks, naptime, or outdoor recreation, or when it needs to be replaced. When a cloth face covering is temporarily removed, it should be placed in a clean paper bag (marked with the student’s name and date) until it needs to be put on again.

Schools must exclude students from campus if they are not exempt from wearing a face covering and refuse to wear one provided by the school. Schools should

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develop protocols to provide a face covering to students who inadvertently fail to bring a face covering to school to prevent unnecessary exclusions. Schools should offer alternative educational opportunities for students who are excluded from campus.

All staff must use face coverings in accordance with [CDPH guidelines](#) unless Cal/OSHA standards require respiratory protection. In limited situations where a face coverings cannot be used for pedagogical or developmental reasons, (i.e. communicating or assisting young children or those with special needs) a face shield can be used instead of a cloth face covering while in the classroom as long as the wearer maintains physical distance from others, to the extent practicable. Once this limited situation is complete, staff must return to wearing a face covering. Workers handling or serving food must use gloves in addition to face coverings. See more details in [CDPH's School Guidance](#).

Please also review your school's reopening plan for their face covering requirements, as certain schools may be more restrictive than the requirements outlined by the State.

23. Will my child's classroom be increasing ventilation?

Adequate ventilation is key to slowing the spread of COVID-19. Schools will be working to introduce fresh outdoor air as much as possible, for example, by opening windows where practicable. If using air conditioning, they will use the setting that brings in outside air. The CDC has information about [air filtration and ventilation](#). See more details in [CDPH's School Guidance](#) and refer to your school's reopening plan for more details

24. Will my child's classroom be cleaned every day?

Schools will clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces at least daily. Frequently touched surfaces in the school include, but are not limited to:

- Door handles
- Light switches
- Sink handles
- Bathroom surfaces
- Tables
- Student Desks
- Chairs
- Some high-touch resources, like water fountains, may also be closed at your school in favor of less high-touch options.

Refer to your school's reopening plan for details on their cleaning/disinfection protocols. For more details on disinfecting protocols, see [CDPH School Guidance](#).