

Covid Policies: 2022-2023

State-Required School Reopening Plan

As it has for the past two years the State of Rhode Island is requiring schools to draft School Reopening Plans that outline the layered COVID-19 mitigation strategies designed to ensure schools remain open. On August 11, 2022, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) issued new guidance for public schools titled: Operational Guidance for K-12 Schools and Early Care and Education Programs to Support Safe In-Person Learning. On August 24, 2022, the RI Department of Health (RIDOH) released version 10 of the Outbreak Response Protocols: Pre K-12 Schools: Guidance for COVID-19 Outbreak Response in Pre K-12 Schools. Our school Reopening Plan is designed to align with the recommendations of those two guiding documents. As we have done in the past, we will monitor the implementation of our plan, and adjust protocols as needed or as required by the State. Our first guiding principle remains mitigating the impacts of COVID-19, while concurrently providing a high-quality, rigorous, and personalized in-person learning environment.

Note: A central theme in these documents is that the strategies outlined are recommendations. The RIDOH Outbreak Response Playbook specifically states: “Schools should decide how to manage exposures based on the approach that works best for their communities.”

Updated COVID-19 Isolation Guidance After Testing Positive for COVID-19

The RIDOH Outbreak Response Playbook states: “People should isolate at home for at least 5 full days after the date of their first positive test (asymptomatic) or when symptoms first appeared (symptomatic).

- They may leave isolation after 5 full days* if they
 - Are fever-free for at least 24 hours without use of fever-reducing medicine and COVID-19 symptoms have improved or are improving;
 - Wear a high-quality mask around others for 10 days; and
 - Avoid being around people who are immunocompromised or at high risk for severe disease
- If a mask is unable to be worn, the individual should isolate at home for a full 10 days.
- People who have COVID-19 symptoms that recur or worsen, should isolate again and consult a healthcare provider with any questions about the symptoms or when to end isolation.”

Note: People who are immunocompromised or experiencing moderate or severe illness should isolate at home until at least 10 full days have passed since the date of their first positive test or when symptoms first appeared.

Updated Recommendations for Responding to Students and Staff with COVID-19 Symptoms

The RIDOH Outbreak Response Playbook states: “COVID-19 symptom protocols should be included in existing school illness policies. Schools maintain the ability to choose the best COVID-19 symptom policy for their community. Students and staff who come to school with symptoms or develop symptoms while at school should:

- Be asked to wear a well-fitting mask while in the building;
- Either be sent home and encouraged to get tested or test for COVID-19 at school;
 - If the test result is positive, isolate, and then send the student or staff home;
 - or
 - If the test result is negative, use clinical judgment to decide how to respond to the symptoms in line with illness policies (e.g., students and staff who have fevers or are vomiting should be sent home).
- Masks should be worn at all times in school nurse offices/spaces; and
- Schools should establish a flexible space which can be used for isolation when needed.

Updated Recommendations for Close Contacts to Manage Exposure to COVID-19 - NEW!

The RIDOH Outbreak Response Playbook states: “Regardless of vaccination status or previous infection, all students and staff who were exposed to COVID-19 should follow recommendations to limit transmission.” All students and staff “who were exposed to COVID-19 should:

- Monitor COVID-19 symptoms for 10 days;
- Wear a well-fitting mask for 10 days; and
- Get tested after 5 full days.

Schools may consider using serial antigen testing (at least 2 rapid antigen tests 48 hours apart during a 7-day period) or a Test to Stay approach to help keep students learning in person safely. Find more information on the CDC’s web page for school testing. Accommodations may be necessary for exposed people who cannot wear a mask or have difficulty wearing a well-fitting mask.”

Updated Recommendations for Extra Precautions for People at Risk of Getting Very Sick

The RIDOH Outbreak Response Playbook states: “schools should consider the needs of people who are at risk for getting very sick with COVID-19, or who have family members at risk for getting very sick with COVID-19, in order to provide the critical protection necessary for in-person learning.” When considering the communities’ specific needs, schools may consider:

- Following isolation and quarantine guidance for high-risk congregate settings, which includes recommendations of a 10-day period for isolation;
- Mask-wearing by people who are immunocompromised or at risk for getting very sick with COVID-19 at medium and high COVID-19 Community Levels;
- Mask-wearing by people who spend time indoors with others who are at risk for getting very sick with COVID-19, even when the COVID-19 Community Level is not high; and
- Screening testing at all COVID-19 Community Levels to reduce transmission and improve health outcomes.”

Overview of RIDOH Playbook Recommendations for COVID-19 Mitigation in Schools

The RIDOH Outbreak Response Playbook states: that “schools should take steps to manage all infectious diseases, including COVID-19, by:

- Promoting vaccination;
- Optimizing ventilation
- Promoting hand and respiratory hygiene;
- Cleaning and disinfection;
- Integrating staying home when sick, isolation, and managing exposure
- protocols into illness policies;
- Offering school-supported diagnostic testing;
- Masking at all times in school nurse offices/spaces; and
- Maintaining the capacity for screening testing.”

Masks / Face Coverings are Recommended, but not Required in Most Instances

The Face Covering Policy of the School Committee aligns the requirement to wear a face covering to state and Federal requirements. Accordingly, face coverings will be recommended, but not required, for students, employees, and school visitors, unless otherwise required by state or Federal mandate. The RIDOH Outbreak Response Playbook calls for face masks to be worn in the following circumstances:

- During the isolation period after testing positive; and
- While in the school nurse’s office.

Removing Masks After Isolation - New!

The RIDOH Outbreak Response Playbook states: “After isolation, people who have access to antigen tests and return to school before 10 full days may consider using a test-based strategy to potentially remove their mask earlier.

- People may remove their mask before day 11* if they get two negative antigen tests in a row 48 hours apart (first test on day 6 at the earliest).
 - If the antigen test results are negative, they may remove their masks around others (day 8 at the earliest).
 - If the antigen test results are positive, they may still be infectious and should continue wearing a mask and wait at least 48 hours before taking another test.
 - People could choose to continue taking antigen tests at least 48 hours apart until they have two negative test results in a row.
 - This may mean they should continue wearing a mask and testing beyond day 10.”

* Note: This strategy may be considered by people who are unable to mask in order to return to school before 10 full days.

School Testing Programs: Types of Tests - New!

The RIDOH Outbreak Response Playbook states: “RIDOH recommends school policies and programs prioritize use of antigen tests, including self-test kits, because they are highly accessible. Pooled PCR testing remains a good option for large-scale screening testing.

- Antigen tests* are rapid tests which produce accurate results in 15-30 minutes.
- To best detect infection, a negative antigen test should be repeated at least once 48 hours apart.
- *Self-tests are usually antigen tests that can be administered anywhere and aren't administered by a healthcare professional.
- Multiple negative test results increase the confidence that there's no COVID-19 infection.
- Laboratory-processed tests, such as PCR tests, are not recommended for regular infection control due to access challenges and longer processing times.
- Nucleic acid amplification tests (NAATs), such as PCR tests, shouldn't be used if someone tested positive within the last 90 days.

* For questions and information about school testing and resources for schools, contact RIDOH.COVIDK12Testing@health.ri.gov.”

How to Access COVID-19 Testing Outside School

The RIDOH Outbreak Response Playbook states: “There are many ways to get a COVID-19 test. Find the most convenient way for you at covid.ri.gov/testing.

- A school nurse, healthcare provider, primary care provider, or pediatrician;
- [Respiratory Clinics or Urgent Care Centers](#);
- [Retail Pharmacies \(e.g., CVS, Walgreens\)](#);
- **Self-test kits are available at local pharmacies, online retailers, from the federal government, and schools:**
 - 270,000 antigen tests will be allocated to all pre K-12 schools in Rhode Island based on student enrollment and health equity which may be sent home to families as determined by school
 - Private health insurers are required to cover the cost of up to eight tests per month; and
 - Every home in the United States is eligible to order a third round of free self-test kits at covidtests.gov.

- There are places in Rhode Island that offer free testing for people who don't have insurance. Federal programs, like the [Increased Community Access to Testing \(ICATT\) Program](#) or the [Test to Treat Program](#) offer free testing for everyone."

RIDOH COVID-19 Vaccine Information

The RIDOH Outbreak Response Playbook states: "Stay healthy and learning in person by staying up to date with your COVID-19 vaccine.

- Everyone should stay up to date with their COVID-19 vaccines. This means getting all recommended COVID-19 vaccines, including a booster dose when eligible:
 - Find COVID-19 vaccine recommendations in [this chart](#) and clinical guidance in the [CDC's Interim Immunization Schedule](#).
 - A new [bivalent COVID-19 vaccine](#) is expected to be authorized as a booster for Fall 2022.
- Schools that want to hold vaccination clinics can email RIDOH's Office of Immunization at RIDOH.C19VaxClinics@health.ri.gov.
- RIDOH will provide a list of immunizers that can best meet your community's needs. This is similar to how the Office of Immunization supports flu clinics.
- For more information about COVID-19 vaccine in Rhode Island, visit C19VaccineRI.org and check the [COVID-19 Vaccine Frequently Asked Questions](#)."

Please Continue to Proactively Notify the School of a Possible or Actual COVID Case

Please continue to notify your child's school if your child is a symptomatic case, probable case, confirmed case and have your child remain home. Moreover, if your child or a household member had a COVID-19 test and you are waiting for the result, please have your child/children remain home until you have received the test results and verified that they are negative. This is not a requirement of the State. It is a practice that has helped us minimize the number of students who need to quarantine.

This could eliminate the need for other students / staff to quarantine if your child ultimately tests positive. Please notify your child's school of his/her status using the following email addresses so we may plan and respond accordingly:

Captain Isaac Paine Elementary School Families please email - cipcovidereporting@paineschool.org