



# Testing and Tracing COVID - 19

Williamson  
Central School

**The Williamson Central School District will not conduct any COVID-19 TESTING at school.**

- ☒ Staff and Families will conduct screening protocols daily prior to coming into school buildings.**
- ☒ We will refer any staff or student exhibiting symptoms or requesting testing to the Wayne County Department of Public Health.**
- ☒ We will follow the Wayne County Department of Public Health's guidance regarding return protocols.**

**The Wayne County Department of Health will facilitate Contact Tracing.**

## Testing Protocol and Procedures Developed by the School District's Medical Director

### **Executive Summary**

Despite mitigation efforts such as daily health surveys and the district's best efforts to minimize transmission with cohorts (PK-8), face coverings, and physical distancing, among others, infections can still happen in a school setting. When surveillance has failed and infection occurs in the school setting during the school day, the school district has four basic responsibilities to get a person referred for testing:

1. Recognition and assessment;
2. Isolation and containment;
3. Family and Department of Health (DOH) notification, and
4. Referral to the private physician or other health care provider for testing.

### **The district does not do testing.**

Infection spread might be limited to a classroom or might occur between class cohorts. The school nurse will use a fever and symptom algorithm developed by our district's medical director to recognize and assess anyone with symptoms suggestive of COVID-19. When a school nurse suspects COVID-19, the nurse will immediately isolate and contain that individual from others. The nurse will then notify the emergency contact that dismissal is necessary and keep the individual safe and comfortable until dismissal. (Should the nurse later learn from the individual or parent that they tested positive, the nurse will also notify the Department of Health.)

The nurse will recommend to the individual or parent/guardian referral by phone or in-person that same day to the private physician or other health care provider for evaluation and COVID-19 testing. The nurse will give the individual written information from the CDC on what to do when ill with COVID-19.

The school nurse and District's Medical Director will both work with the local public health department and the private physician or other health care provider as needed. However, the private physician or other health care provider and the local public health department will determine who will be tested and will conduct the testing. The district cannot require testing.

All positive laboratory confirmed or physician diagnosed probable cases are managed on a case-by-case basis for a return out of isolation and back to school. Health

certificates from the private physician or other health care provider and the public health department's direct guidance will be required. Lacking testing, individuals must follow CDC and NYS DOH symptom-based criteria for a return to school.

### **Referral for Testing**

The school nurse will advise all individuals or parents/persons in parental relations that anyone dismissed for presumed or suspected COVID-19 must be in contact that same day by phone or in-person with their private physician or other health care provider. They will be advised to describe the symptoms that were consistent with COVID-19. The school nurse will advise that the district recommends COVID-19 testing per the NYS DOH guidelines for persons who have symptoms of COVID-19. They will be advised that they cannot return to school without symptom-based criteria clearance from their physician or other health care provider and COVID-19 test results. The school nurse will suggest that they not post on social media any references to their medical condition including COVID-19. The nurse will provide written guidelines from the CDC on what to do if ill with COVID-19.

If test results are positive for COVID-19, the individual/parent will be advised that the District is required to provide names of contacts with the health department for contact tracing. The individual will also be required to provide such a list to the Department of Health.

A letter notifying the school community that a positive case, not identifying any individual, grade-level or classroom by name, has been confirmed.

### Contact Tracing Protocol and Procedures Developed by the School District's Medical Director

#### **Executive Summary**

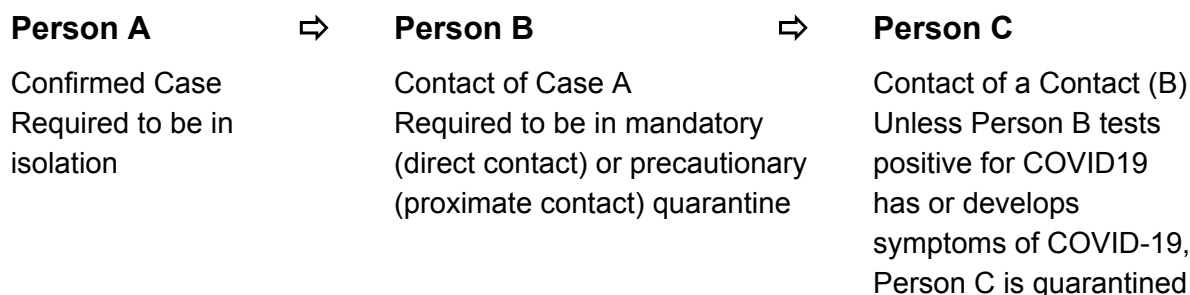
Contact tracing is a complex investigational tool that involves identifying people who have an infectious disease (index cases) and people with whom they came in contact (contacts). **The district does not do contact tracing.** The district works closely and cooperatively with the epidemiologists at the Department of Health who do contact tracing.

Once identified, trained staff work with contacts to interrupt disease spread by calling every single person with whom they were in contact over the infectious period. Contact tracing includes asking people with COVID-19 to isolate themselves for at least 10 days and until they are 72 hours without fever off fever-reducing medications, and until their

symptoms are improving, so other people do not catch the disease from them. Contact tracers also ask that asymptomatic close contacts to quarantine themselves at home voluntarily for 14 days.

Public health law mandates the district to keep track of and to report to the DOH the names of contacts within the school of a first (index) case for any reportable infection. This is not a new procedure and has been done by the School District in the past for common childhood illnesses like mumps, whooping cough, and unusual highly contagious diseases like meningococcal meningitis. Now we will do so for COVID-19. That is the law and will be followed by the District. The DOH will be in direct contact with individuals through contact tracing if a case of COVID-19 is found within a school building, and if there is a risk you or a child could have been exposed. Otherwise, the district will send a general letter to staff and students in the building notifying people that a case of COVID-19 was confirmed. Confidentiality will be maintained. However, you will know that if you were not contacted by the DOH, you were not a direct contact of the positive index case.

#### A diagram of contact tracing



#### **Definitions:**

**Close contact** is defined as contact for more than 10 minutes at a distance closer than six-feet from 48 hours before the person became ill until the person was isolated of an infected person with laboratory confirmed or probable COVID-19.

**Probable COVID-19** is defined as a person who meets clinical and epidemiological evidence of covid-19, but who does not have laboratory confirmation. (For asymptomatic persons, the time frame is two days prior to specimen collection until the time the patient is isolated.)

**Proximate Contact** is defined as being in the same enclosed environment such as a classroom, office, or gatherings but greater than 6 ft. from a person displaying symptoms of covid-19 or someone who has tested positive for covid-19.

**NOTE:**

It is important to note that brief interactions between individuals are less likely to result in transmission; however, symptoms and the type of interaction remain important. The longer the exposure, the more the exposure risk. (e.g., Did the person cough directly into the face of the individual or did the two individuals briefly pass one another in a hallway? The first example is a higher risk than the second.)

In general, **contact tracing** involves identifying people who have an infectious disease (cases) and people who they came in contact with (contacts). Once identified, trained staff work with them to interrupt disease spread. Contact tracing includes asking people with COVID-19 to isolate themselves so other people do not catch the disease from them. It also asks their close contacts to quarantine themselves at home voluntarily.

Contact tracing for covid-19 typically involves:

- Interviewing people with positive COVID-19 test results to identify everyone they had close contact with during the time they may have been infectious. The infectious period is defined as 48 hours before the onset of symptoms and 10 days after the onset of symptoms.
- Notifying contacts of their potential exposure.
- Referring contacts for testing.
- Monitoring contacts for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 for 14 days.

Because our society is in the middle of a pandemic, the District must release the names and contact information of all close and proximate contacts of positive or probable COVID-19. The school nurse will provide the DOH with the name and contact information. The DOH will conduct appropriate contact tracing of every individual identified as a close or proximate contact. The school nurse will work and cooperate closely with the epidemiologist at the DOH to ensure that a list of school contacts, if identified as a risk by the DOH within and outside of the cohort, is provided to the best of our ability.

It is helpful to remember that the contact of a positive case will be asked to self-quarantine for 14 days in the event symptoms develop. A contact, person c, of a contact, person b, however, is generally not considered at risk and is not asked to

quarantine unless the first contact, person b, turned positive. If person b turned positive, then person c would be the contact of a positive case and would need to quarantine for 14 days.

<b>Person A</b>	⇒	<b>Person B</b>	⇒	<b>Person C</b>
Confirmed Case Required to be in isolation		Contact of Case A Required to be in mandatory (direct contact) or precautionary (proximate contact) quarantine		Contact of a Contact (B) Unless Person B tests positive for COVID19 has or develops symptoms of COVID-19, Person C is quarantined

### **Positive Test Results**

Anyone identified by the public health department or their physician, if the individual so chooses that route of care, as eligible for testing may choose to be tested. If tested positive and showing symptoms, that individual must follow CDC standard criteria for when isolation can end. In this case, the DOH will use a test-based criteria return to school which includes the following:

1. MD/DO/NP/PA Health Certificate with two negative acute COVID-19 molecular test results, both taken since symptoms first appeared done at least 24 hrs. apart and;
2. an attestation by the treating MD/DO/NP/PA that the individual meets symptom-based return to school criteria.

Additionally, a district notification letter will be sent to staff and families when any infectious disease has been identified in a classroom. The letter will be sent alerting everyone that a case of COVID-19 has been confirmed in our school and that everyone should be mindful to watch for symptoms of the disease for the next 14 days. The letter is confidential, and no identification will be provided.

### **Symptomatic or Asymptomatic with Negative Test Results**

If test results for COVID-19 are negative, with or without symptoms, a health certificate from the treating MD/DO/NP/PA with HIPAA/FERPA release that acute illness is unrelated to COVID-19, affirming the individual meets symptom-based-criteria must be provided before the individual can return to school.

Symptom-based criteria currently in place by the NYSDOH include:

1. At least 72 hours without fever off fever-reducing medications, and
2. At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared, or since test date, and
3. Other symptoms have improved.

It is noteworthy that some persons with severe illness may produce competent virus for more than 10 days, and may need isolation up to twenty (20) days after symptom onset. In cases of severe illness, the School District's Medical Director may consider asking for a release from an infectious disease expert as recommended by the CDC before allowing an individual back in school.

#### **Symptomatic Individuals Who Do Not Provide a Health Certificate**

The district anticipates that despite the DOH recommendation that any individual who presents with symptoms suggestive of COVID-19 contact their private physician or other health care provider, there are some who simply will not. In that case, the District will use the symptom-based criteria without a medical certificate for return, but with the minimum of 10 days before an individual is allowed back, and the standard of 72 hours fever-free with an improvement of symptoms.

#### **Symptomatic Individuals with a Health Certificate Documenting an Acute Illness but without COVID-19 Test Results**

The district also anticipates that there may be symptomatic individuals who see a physician or other health care provider but who do not have testing because the diagnosis is thought not to be COVID-19 by the examiner. The NYSDOH has stipulated that no one who had symptoms consistent with COVID-19 may be allowed back without COVID-19 testing based on a physician's or other health care provider's health certificate alone for an acute illness. This is because other comorbid conditions are known to exist with COVID-19 and can hide the presence of COVID-19, like strep throat. Therefore, if there is no testing for COVID-19 and an individual was dismissed from school by the nurse with suspicion of COVID-19, a symptom-based criteria will be used with a minimum of 10-days before an individual is allowed back, and the standard of 72 hours fever free with an improvement of symptoms.

#### **Symptomatic Individuals with a Health Certificate Documenting a Chronic Illness with an Acute Exacerbation but without COVID-19 Test Results**



There are some chronic medical conditions that may have symptoms similar to COVID-19 that a treating physician or other health care provider may be aware of that is not in the school medical record. Therefore, anyone with a chronic medical condition, such as asthma or cystic fibrosis, among others that are well known to a treating physician or other treating health care provider, may be documented as such by that examiner, and that individual may be cleared to return to school. The district recommends that conditions whose symptoms may mimic COVID-19 should be put into a formal individual healthcare plan to avoid confusion and needless loss time from instruction in the future. A note from the treating physician or other health care provider with an emergency action plan will facilitate this process for students.

## **From the Desk of the School Physician**

### **Our school has a confirmed case of COVID-19. Now what?**

Don't panic!

About 1 out of 100 New Yorkers currently are infected with COVID-19. When school opens, and people come closer together, we expect we might see cases of COVID-19 in our school. Cases can happen even if we wear masks, keep a distance from each other, wash our hands, and do everything we are supposed to do right. The reason is that these behaviors reduce the risk of disease spread, but they do not guarantee we will not get the virus. So we should not be surprised or scared if it happens. Most people, about 8 out of 10, have a flu-like illness when they have COVID-19 and fully recover. But we should understand what might happen if someone in our school gets sick with COVID-19 because their illness can affect us.

When someone gets sick with possible COVID-19, this person is sent to the health office. Yup, the school nurse thinks this might be COVID-19 and puts the person into a containment room so they can rest comfortably until someone comes to pick them up. The sick person has to wear a face covering and must stay away from others, at least six feet. When the person is picked up, the school nurse will suggest that the parent call their private physician or other health care provider that day to discuss whether to go directly for a COVID-19 test. After testing, if done, the person will be asked to isolate at home for at least 10 days, until they are without fever for 72 hours, off all fever reducing medicine, and are feeling better, able to learn, and symptoms are improving. The person who was ill will need to bring in a letter or health certificate from their physician as well as a HIPAA/FERPA release and COVID-19 test results.

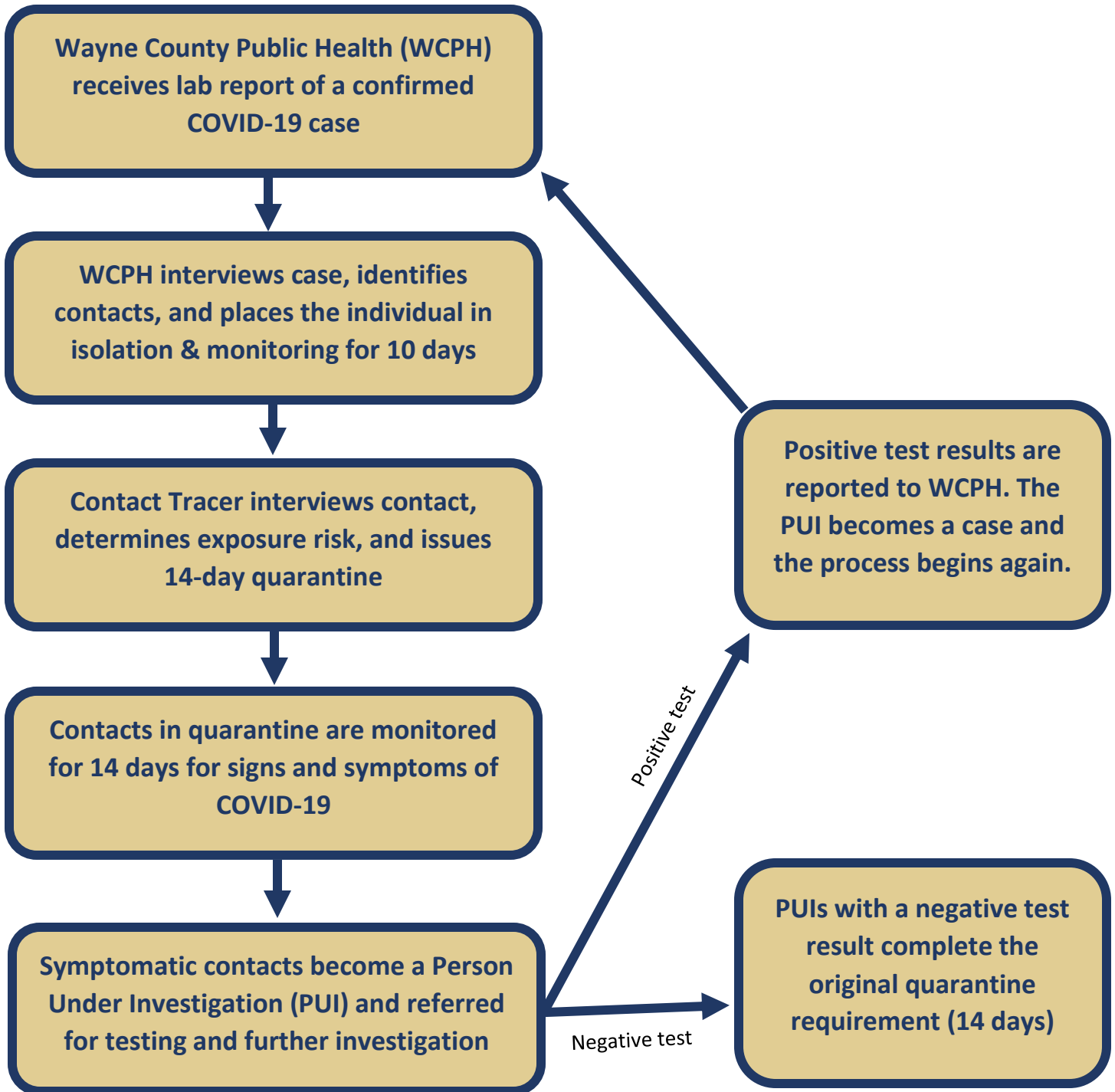
While the sick person is home getting better, back at school close contacts within 6 ft for more than 10 minutes will have gotten a call from the public health department that they were exposed to a person positive for COVID-19. They will be asked to self-quarantine at home for 14-days from the date of their exposure, advised to check their temperature twice a day, and to watch for symptoms. Proximate contacts more than 6 feet for longer times may also be asked to do the same, if the public health department decides there is a significant risk for them, too. The school will send out a general letter to the entire building reminding them to do the daily health screening because of the positive case in the building.

Any area of the building that required quarantine is closed and disinfected before anyone can reenter. Depending on the number of contacts, a few people, an entire class, a wing or corridor, or even the entire building may need to quarantine for 14-days following an exposure. Isolation and quarantine should not alarm anyone. These are precautionary measures to safeguard us all when COVID-19 is discovered.



# Wayne County Public Health/Wayne County Schools

## COVID-19 Student Contact Monitoring Process



*School administration and school health staff provide WCPH with information and assistance with investigations upon request.*

