

## NDDOH Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools

A safe return to in-person learning for is a priority for the upcoming academic year. The North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) provides data and resources for public health information to inform decisions being made at the local level.

A [combination of layered prevention strategies](#) such as indoor masking, COVID-19 school screening/testing programs, cohorting, improved ventilation, handwashing, covering coughs and sneezes, staying home when sick with symptoms of infectious illness including COVID-19, and regular cleaning to help reduce transmission risk.

Schools are encouraged to **monitor community transmission, vaccination coverage, COVID-19 school screening testing, and occurrence of outbreaks** to guide decisions on the level of layered prevention strategies (e.g., physical distancing, screening testing).

If schools decide to remove prevention strategies in schools based on **local conditions**, they are encouraged to **remove them one at a time** and monitor closely (with adequate testing) for any increases in COVID-19 cases before removing the next prevention strategy.

The following measures may reduce the potential transmission of COVID-19 in K-12 schools:

### Promote Vaccination

- Everyone **12 years of age and older** is now [eligible to get a COVID-19 vaccination](#). **Eligible individuals** are encouraged to be [vaccinated](#).
- Achieving high levels of COVID-19 vaccination among teachers, staff, and household members and eligible students is one of the most critical strategies to help schools maintain full operations safely.
- Vaccination is currently the leading public health prevention strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Wear Face Coverings

- The CDC recommends **universal indoor mask use for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors to K-12 schools**, regardless of vaccination status. The NDDoH provides data and resources to help inform decisions made at the local level.
- In a [CDC order](#), passengers and drivers **MUST wear a mask** on school buses operated by public and private school systems. Schools should make masks available to students and staff for each bus ride.

### Encourage physical distance and additional prevention strategies

- At least **3 feet of physical distance between students within classrooms**, combined with **universal indoor mask wearing**.
- At least **6 feet of physical distance** between students and teachers/staff, teachers/staff who are **NOT fully vaccinated**.
- [Ventilation](#)

- [Handwashing and respiratory etiquette](#)
- [Staying home when sick and getting tested](#)
- [Cleaning and disinfection](#)
- [Contact tracing, in combination with isolation and quarantine](#)

### Implement a Screening/Testing Plan

- In partnership with the North Dakota Regional Education Associations (REA) and Local Public Health units (LPH), the North Dakota Department of Health (NDDOH) can support North Dakota (ND) schools with an individualized COVID-19 screening/testing plan. All schools in ND are encouraged to continue to take part in contact tracing.
- Schools participating in the screening/testing program will have modified close contact guidelines because of the ability to regularly screen close contact cases.
- These modified guidelines allow students to continue in-person learning and extracurricular activities if they remain asymptomatic, screen daily or every other day, throughout the possible time of infection, and all results are negative for COVID-19.
- screening/testing programs, cohorting, improved ventilation, handwashing and covering coughs and sneezes, staying home when sick with symptoms of infectious illness including COVID-19, and regular cleaning to help reduce transmission risk.

### Plan and Prepare

- Each school district and school should have an [Emergency Operations Plan \(EOP\)](#) in place to protect students, teachers, staff and families from the spread of COVID-19 for the upcoming school year.
- Schools should complete an assessment of personal protective equipment (PPE) and disinfection supplies needed for the institution and establish a plan for maintaining the supplies needed.
- Schools are encouraged to continue working with regular suppliers. In some instances, it may be necessary to identify multiple options for suppliers or prioritize near-term versus long-term needs.

### For additional resources please see:

Information in this document is based on the CDC [Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools](#).

The NDDoH has these links and resources available for citizens to help them make informed decisions.

CDC COVID-19 County Data Tracker [CDC COVID-19 county data tracker](#)

NDDoH COVID-19 Dashboard [North Dakota Coronavirus Cases \(nd.gov\)](#)

NDDoH Vaccine Dashboard [COVID19 Vaccine Dashboard | Department of Health \(nd.gov\)](#)

Vaccine Locator [COVID Vaccine Locator | Department of Health \(nd.gov\)](#)

Tools for businesses and workplaces [CDC Guidance for Workplaces and Businesses | Department of Health](#)

CDC Guidance for [School Settings | COVID-19 | CDC](#)

[North Dakota Child Care and School Infectious Disease Exclusion Guide](#)

[Schools | Child Care | Universities | Department of Health \(nd.gov\)](#)