

NOVEL CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCHOOLS

SITUATION: There are COVID-19 cases in North Dakota, but not in your community

The North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) does not recommend school closures if cases are not occurring in your community. Schools should follow [CDC guidance](#) regarding preparing for COVID-19. The guidance includes monitoring absenteeism, keeping sick children out, ensuring handwashing, environmental cleaning, communicating with parents, etc. Districts should consult with their local public health unit to determine if cases are occurring in their community.

SITUATION: There are COVID-19 cases in your community, but there are no cases in your school

The NDDoH does not recommend school closures if the ongoing spread is not identified in your school. Schools should follow [CDC guidance](#) regarding preparing for COVID-19. The guidance includes monitoring absenteeism, keeping sick children out, ensuring handwashing, environmental cleaning, communicating with parents, etc.

SITUATION: There is one case of COVID-19 in your school

If there is a COVID-19 case in your school, the NDDoH will notify the facility. If a school is made aware of a COVID-19 case before being contacted by the NDDoH, please report the case to the NDDoH at **(888) 788-2510**.

The confirmed case of COVID-19 must be excluded ([isolation period](#)) from school for 10

days after onset of symptoms (if no symptoms, then exclusion is ten days after collection date of test) **and** be fever free for 24 hours (without the use of fever reducing medications) **and** have improvement of symptoms, whichever is longer. The NDDoH will provide guidance to the school and the case or case's parents/guardians.

Close contacts to a confirmed case of COVID-19 will be [quarantined](#) (must stay home) for 14 days from their last exposure to a case. A close contact is defined as someone who is within six feet of a confirmed case for a total of 15 minutes or greater. It may also be someone who is directly coughed on or exposed to a case's secretions. Close contacts will be identified by the NDDoH during the investigation. In a school setting, close contacts to a case are often friends, teammates, classmates sitting next to, in front of, or behind the case, and potentially children in the same room as a case. This may mean that certain classrooms in a school have to be closed for 14 calendar days. If a case occurs in staff or children who are in multiple classrooms, then this may mean a higher number of close contacts have to be excluded from school for 14 calendar days.

SITUATION: There are two or more cases of COVID-19 in your school within 14 calendar days

Specific classrooms or grades may have to close if additional cases occur in a school. Public health (NDDoH or local public health) will provide guidance as to when a school should close. Schools may also make this determination based on the availability of staffing or level of absenteeism.

SITUATION: There is/are a close contact(s) in your school

Children or staff who are identified as close contacts to a confirmed case of COVID-19 must be excluded from the school ([quarantine](#)) until 14 calendar days after their last known exposure to the case. Close contacts will be identified by the NDDoH and informed to stay home. Even if a close contact tests negative during their 14-day quarantine period, the contact must complete the 14-day quarantine period. It can take up to 14 days to develop COVID-19.

If a parent or other household member tests positive, the child may need to stay out of school for the case's [isolation period](#) (10 calendar days from onset) plus the child's

[quarantine period](#) (14 calendar days). Public health authorities will advise the parent as to how long the child will need to be removed from school.

If a parent is a contact to someone confirmed to be positive for COVID-19 (case), then the child may still attend school if the child did not have direct contact to a case.

SITUATION: Ill children in your school

When there is more community transmission, the likelihood that individuals with symptoms actually have COVID-19 is higher. Therefore, symptom screenings may be more helpful when COVID-19 transmission in the community is high.

Parents/caregivers should be encouraged to monitor their children for signs of infectious illness every day.

In addition to [general infectious disease exclusion criteria](#), schools should exclude ill children who meet the following criteria:

Fever (100.4°F or higher) **OR** loss of taste and/or smell **OR** two or more of the following symptoms: fatigue, headache, muscle/body aches, chills, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, congestion/runny nose, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain.

Children should stay home according to the [NDDoH School Exclusion Guidance Decision Tree](#).

SITUATION: Ill employees in your school

Schools/employees should use a [screening tool](#) to determine exclusion.

Employees should be excluded from work based on the following criteria:

Fever (100.4°F or higher)/feeling feverish **OR new or worsening** symptom(s) of cough, sore throat, muscle/body aches, severe headache with fever, shortness of breath, vomiting, diarrhea, or loss of taste/smell.

Employees should be referred to a health care provider. If tested for COVID-19, the individual should be excluded from work until test results are available. If not tested for COVID-19, the individual should be sent home until at least 24 hours have passed since recovery defined as resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications and improvement in symptoms.