Navigating the COVID-19 Pandemic in New Hampshire

Grades K-12 School Re-Opening

NH Department of Health & Human Services
Division of Public Health Services
August 3, 2020
Webinars and Calls with School Partners

• Webinar with school nurses held on 7/20: https://www.education.nh.gov/who-we-are/commissioner/covid-19

• Weekly **Friday** recurring calls with school partners from **noon-1pm**:
  o Zoom link: https://nh-dhhs.zoom.us/j/98062195081
  o Call-in phone number: (646) 558-8656
  o Meeting ID: 980 6219 5081
  o Passcode: 197445
Goal of School Re-Opening

- Maximize the in-person educational experience
- Minimize risks of COVID-19 to students and staff
- Build in flexibility to allow multiple learning options and movement between learning models
- Continue to provide important community and social supports to students and families
Symptoms of COVID-19

- Fever or chills (including subjective fever)
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Sore throat
- Nasal congestion or runny nose
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

How COVID-19 is Transmitted

- Person-to-person: Primarily through respiratory droplets
  - Close physical proximity (within 6 feet highest risk)
  - Prolonged duration of contact (longer duration increases risk)
  - From a person who is symptomatic or asymptomatic

- Person-to-person: respiratory aerosols (airborne spread)
  - Not the primary means of spread
  - Certain circumstances can increase risk:
    - Aerosol-generating procedure in the medical setting (airway suctioning, intubation, high-flow oxygen, nebulizer administration)
    - Singing?
How COVID-19 is Transmitted

• Fomites (contaminated surfaces)
  – Theoretical risk - not the main way the virus spreads
  – In laboratory controlled conditions, the virus causing COVID-19 has been found to be able to survive for up to 72 hours on plastic & stainless steel. No survivable virus found after 24 hours on cardboard.
    • Median half-life: steel (5.6 hours), plastic (6.8 hours)
    • Reference: https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32511427/

New Hampshire
Grades K-12
Back-to-School Guidance

https://www.covidguidance.nh.gov/
Layers of Protection

- Symptom and temperature screening of students & staff
- Social (physical) distancing
- Cloth face coverings/masks
- Hand hygiene
- Limit group sizes and avoiding congregating (large common areas)
- Cohorting (grouping) students & staff
- Frequent cleaning and disinfection
Keep Symptomatic People Out

• Develop a process for screening staff, students, and visitors daily for fever, symptoms, or risk factors for COVID-19 prior to entering the facility:
  
  o For staff and visitors, screening should occur on educational facility grounds at the start of each day

  o For students, the parents/guardians should be asked to screen their children daily before sending the child to school

  o We also recommend that schools look to develop a secondary, redundant, simplified process for identifying symptomatic students before/as they enter classrooms (not necessarily temperature checking)
Screening for Symptoms and Risk Factors

- COVID-19 symptom and risk factor screening should involve asking if the individual:
  - Has any symptoms of COVID-19 (list individual symptoms)?
  - Has had close contact with someone who is suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 in the prior 14 days?
  - Traveled in the prior 14 days outside of New England (outside of NH, VT, ME, MA, CT, RI)?
Social Distancing Recommendations

• Maximize physical distance between students
• Students should be spaced at least 3 feet apart
• Ideal/goal distance is still 6 feet apart ("preferred")
• Social distancing needs to be implemented with other protective measures (layers of protection) – in situations where students are within 3-6 feet of each other, it becomes more important for schools to look at implementing cloth face coverings (see [CDC guidance](https://www.cdc.gov))
Social Distancing Recommendations

• Rationale for NH Recommendations:
  – NH guidance is consistent with [American Academy of Pediatrics Guidance for School Re-Entry](https://www.aap.org/en-us/advocacy-and-policy/policy-statements/Pages/School-Opening-Guidance.aspx) and with guidance released by many other states
  – An [analysis in The Lancet](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(20)31157-9/fulltext) (systematic review of the literature) found that physical distancing of at least one meter was effective and “associated with a large reduction in infection”
  – Greater distances are probably more effective at preventing spread of COVID-19, but the additional benefit of increasing separation from 3 to 6 feet is unclear
  – Need for flexibility: many schools are not able to separate students by 6 feet and maintain full in-person learning
  – The benefits of in-person learning likely outweigh potential increased risk, especially when other layers of protection are implemented
  – We believe the current levels of community transmission allow for this flexibility
Cloth Face Coverings/Masks

• CDC’s guidance on the Use of Cloth Face Coverings to Help Slow the Spread of COVID-19

• Who should NOT wear cloth face coverings: children < 2 years of age; or anyone who has trouble breathing, is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance

• Cloth face coverings are intended to keep the wearer from spreading the virus to other people (“source control”)

• Cloth face coverings are NOT personal protective equipment (PPE) – while they may offer some protection, they have not been evaluated for effectiveness as PPE

• Masks with exhaust valves are NOT ok to use

• Two hair stylists in Missouri developed respiratory symptoms and were subsequently diagnosed with COVID-19, but continued to work for 8 days (stylist A) and 5 days (stylist B) after developing symptoms

• Stylists worked for a combined 17 days while considered infectious; Exposed 139 clients

• Very high compliance with face mask use by stylists and clients

• Zero people developed COVID-19 (tested about 48% of exposed clients)
Cloth Face Coverings – General Recommendations

• Students should wear cloth face coverings in circumstances where physical distancing cannot be maintained

• Cloth face coverings should also be worn in circumstances where students/staff are at increased risk of coming into close contact with others

• Use of cloth face coverings in classrooms is left to the decision of local school districts

• Consider cloth face coverings in the context of other layers of protection and ability to social distance, cohort students, limit mixing between students, etc.
Who to Exclude from School

• Anybody with new or unexplained symptoms, even if only mild symptoms

• Anybody who reports close contact with a person confirmed to have COVID-19

• Anybody who has traveled outside of New England (NH, VT, ME, MA, CT, RI) in the prior 14 days.
How Long Does A Person Need to Stay Out?

- Symptomatic and confirmed with COVID-19: See CDC’s “symptom-based strategy”
  1. At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared, AND
  2. At least 24 hours have passed since last fever (off fever-reducing meds), AND
  3. Symptoms have improved

- Symptomatic but person refuses testing for COVID-19: Same as if confirmed with COVID-19

- Asymptomatic but tests positive: 10 days (assuming person remains asymptomatic, if person develops symptoms see above)

- Exposed to someone with confirmed COVID-19: 14 days (assuming person remains asymptomatic) – Person cannot “test-out” of quarantine

- Traveled outside of New England: 14 days (from last day of travel)
Should You Screen K-12 Students?

- CDC has issued guidance on screening K-12 students for symptoms of COVID-19

- NH DPHS continues to recommend that parents/guardians conduct temperature, symptom, and risk factor screening on students daily before school

- We continue to recommend any students/staff, even with mild symptoms, be excluded from school and tested

- We are working to evaluate and try and address issues with long testing turn-around-times
Do Siblings Need to Quarantine?

• Siblings of students who are being tested for COVID-19 (either due to symptoms or exposure) generally do NOT need to quarantine

• However, public health may recommend siblings and other close household contacts quarantine while awaiting test results on a case-by-case basis taking into account factors such as:
  – Symptoms and risk factors of the person being tested
  – Current levels of community transmission
  – Whether sibling is in a class of vulnerable individuals
Do Teachers Who Travel Need to Quarantine?

• Requiring teachers to quarantine for 14 days after travel outside of New England at the start of school may be prohibitory to re-opening school in September

• Therefore, we propose that for the start of school teachers who traveled may be allowed back (if necessary) if the following apply:
  – Travel outside of NE was by private car/transportation
  – Teacher wears a cloth face covering/mask while working at the school facility (for at least 14 days after travel if not part of normal school requirement)
  – There was no close contact with a person suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19
  – Teacher passes other symptom screening questions and temperature checks daily
Confirmed COVID-19 and Public Health Investigations

• People who have been in “close contact” (within 6 feet for 10 minutes or longer) to an individual with confirmed COVID-19 need to quarantine

• This will vary by classroom situation
  – In older age groups with consistent assigned seating, it may just be the 2-4 individuals seated around the person
  – In younger age groups where more classroom mingling occurs, it could be the entire classroom

• NH DPHS will work with schools to notify and inform parents/guardians, students, and other staff
Is It Safe to Conduct Extra-Curricular Activities?

• Depends on the extra-curricular activity, location (e.g., indoors vs. outdoors), and ability to maintain physical distancing

• Recommended against physical & close contact sports

• Avoid high-risk crowded situations (e.g., locker rooms)

• Anything that requires forced breathing (e.g., playing a wind instrument) or vocal cord vibration (e.g., singing) may need additional precautions
Other Guidance That May Apply

• Amateur & Youth Sports:

• Health & Fitness:

• Libraries:

• Community Arts & Music Education:

• Performing Arts:
Questions & Answers