

# COVID-19 & Butte County Schools FAQ #1

September 17, 2021

**1. At what threshold do schools close and transition to distance learning? Who is responsible for this decision?**

The most updated guidance from the State does not communicate a threshold of positive COVID-19 cases which require school closure. District Superintendents and charter school leaders will work with their school sites and Butte County Public Health to determine if a school closure is necessary based on several factors, including positive case numbers and available staff to continue in-person learning.

The State has determined that “distance learning” (as it was offered last school year) is not an option for schools to offer at this time. Updated legislation and guidance for **independent study** (both long-term and short-term) have strict requirements that schools must follow. Parents or guardians must contact their child’s school or district office for more information regarding the different independent study options available if in-person instruction is unavailable or not a viable option for the student.

**2. There are a lot of students absent because of COVID-19; why isn’t the school closed?**

Providing students a quality education while keeping staff and students safe is the unified goal of all educational leaders in Butte County. If a school or district administrator believes that in-person learning can continue safely, they will do so. School closure is based on several factors, including positive case numbers and available staff to continue in-person education. If you have concerns regarding your child’s presence at school, please get in touch with your child’s school site or district office for more information about independent study options.

**3. Why are families only informed when my child is a close contact with a confirmed positive case?**

Employees are doing their best to maintain open communications with families when a positive case is discovered on campus. Student privacy laws determine what information can be shared with others and who is qualified to receive an alert regarding potential exposure. The notification process is highly time-consuming due to the COVID-19 positive case reporting that *must* be completed [per State guidance](#). Parents or guardians that would like to volunteer to help with school contact tracing should contact their child’s school or district office for more information.

If you would like more information regarding the contact tracing process at your child’s school, please get in touch with the school or district office directly. All Butte County school district websites and contact information can be found on the [BCOE website](#).

If you believe your child has been exposed to COVID-19, or is exhibiting symptoms, please keep them home and have them tested.

**4. Who monitors the testing requirements if schools allow for modified quarantine and allow masked and asymptomatic students to stay in class?**

School administrators are responsible for ensuring that testing requirements are met at school sites. Schools can implement screening programs using on-site personnel or consider hiring from the local community or working with a vendor that provides end-to-end testing, including personnel. Testing personnel do not need additional healthcare training other than administering the test itself, and some schools have successfully hired local community members to assist with testing. For more information, please view the [CDPH K-12 school-based COVID-19 testing strategies for 2021-22](#).

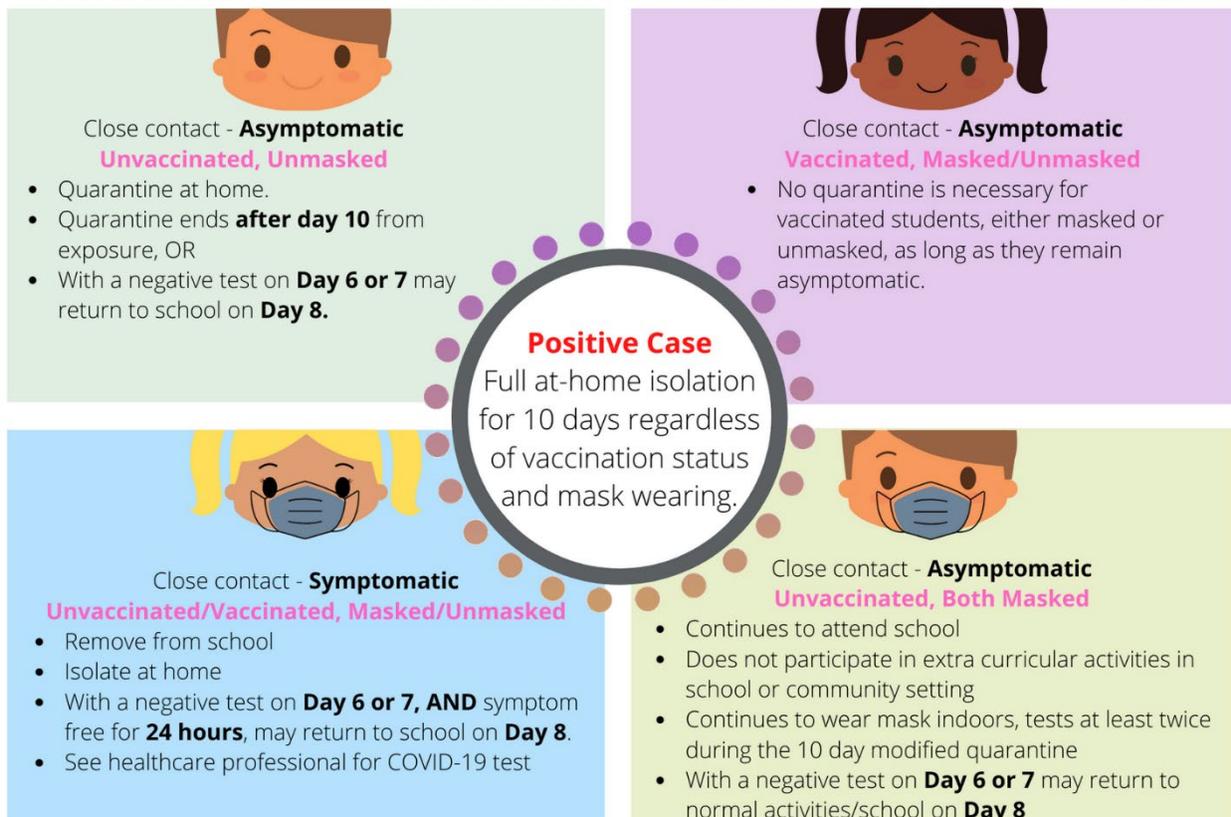
Butte County education leaders are collaborating with Butte County Public Health (BCPH) to explore all options for testing and contact tracing. We will continue to actively work with BCPH to keep our staff, students, families, and community safe.

**5. Why does my child need to quarantine?**

The guidance for quarantine and modified quarantine vary based on different factors, including vaccination status, COVID-19 test results, and the use of face-coverings. The graphic below explains the difference between five different scenarios that affect a student's quarantine time.

For more information, please view the [COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for K-12 Schools in California – Safety Measures for K-12 Schools](#).

## STUDENT CLOSE CONTACTS SCHOOL SETTINGS ONLY



**Asymptomatic close contacts** must continue to self-monitor for symptoms through Day 14 from last known exposure and continue to wear a mask around others, practice handwashing and avoid crowds through Day 14. If symptoms develop, contact must quarantine immediately and are strongly encouraged to be tested.

**6. Why does my child need to quarantine from sports/extracurricular activities if they can go back to school?**

When students are attending school during modified quarantine, they continue to be required to wear masks indoors and are strongly encouraged to wear masks outdoors. They may participate in all required instructional components of the school day, except activities where a mask cannot be worn, such as while playing certain musical instruments. Students should refrain from all extracurricular activities, including sports. For more information, please view the [CDPH COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for K-12 Schools in California – School-Based Extracurricular Activities](#).

**7. Who is enforcing that schools follow the masking guidance?**

School administrators are working to ensure that everyone on campus follows their School Board-approved face-covering policy. School Board-approved face-covering policies differ for each school district in Butte County. The State is in charge of enforcing the CDPH mandate and guidance.

Masks are one of the most effective and simplest safety mitigation layers to prevent in-school transmission of COVID-19 infections and to support full-time in-person instruction in K-12 schools. We encourage families to talk to their children about the importance of wearing a mask when indoors at school.

**8. What happens to a school if they do not follow guidance? How can I report a school for not following state guidance?**

Schools and their employees face substantial legal, financial, and other risks if they do not follow the mandatory universal masking directive. For additional information, please view the [CDPH Requirement for Universal Masking Indoors at K-12 Schools](#).

To request information or to report a school for not following State guidance, you can visit the [CDPH website](#), call the COVID-19 Hotline at **1-833-422-4255**, or send a letter to the California Department of Public Health, PO Box, 997377, MS 0500, Sacramento, CA 95899-7377

**9. How does the school determine if a child is a close contact?**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines a close contact as someone within 6 feet of someone who is a confirmed positive COVID-19 case for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over 24 hours.

**10. Can the schools come up with their own guidance?**

Schools may develop their own guidance to be stricter than the current guidance, but they may not be less restrictive. However, some school boards may vote not to enforce guidance or public health orders.

Schools play a critical role in promoting equity in learning and health, particularly for groups disproportionately affected by COVID-19. For these reasons, health equity considerations related to the K-12 setting are a critical part of decision-making and have been considered in the [COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for K-12 Schools in California](#). We encourage parents to call their school districts to discuss concerns with following the State guidance.

**11. Now that testing is a requirement for school workers and students on modified quarantine, why are there not more testing sites available?**

Butte County educational leaders are working hard to fulfill the requirement of providing weekly testing for unvaccinated workers by October 15, 2021, which is when facilities must be in full compliance.

At the time of creating this FAQ, Butte County healthcare facilities are overwhelmed with COVID-19 cases. There is a strain on our local health system capacity resulting in a shortage of testing materials and personnel to man the test centers.

Visit the [BCPH COVID-19 Testing Information web page](#) for additional information.

**12. Can we use an at-home rapid test?**

Your child's school may or may not accept an at-home test. If they do accept an at-home test, you must use an FDA authorized test. You may be asked to provide proof of the test results. At the time of creating this FAQ, there is a nationwide shortage of rapid tests.

Students who show signs of COVID-19 should not attend school. We encourage parents and guardians to have their children tested for COVID-19 if they begin to show symptoms.

**13. Why can vaccinated people not wear a mask or get tested when it has been shown that vaccinated people can spread the virus?**

People who are fully vaccinated are still encouraged to wear a face-covering indoors in public settings, including schools. Vaccinated school workers must wear a mask when indoors with students.

The CDC and CDPH are continually updating their information regarding vaccines as it becomes available. CDPH will continue to assess conditions on an ongoing basis and will determine whether to update mask requirements or recommendations no later than November 1, 2021. Indicators, conditions, and science reviews will include vaccination coverage status. For more information regarding vaccines and masking for adults in school settings, please review the [State Public Health Officer Order of August 11, 2021](#).

Please visit the [Safe Schools Parent Page – Vaccination for Children web page](#) for the most updated information regarding vaccines for students.

**14. If there is a difference between CDC and CDPH guidance, which guidance do schools follow?**

The CDC has certain authorities to implement regulations related to protecting America from health and safety threats. The CDC and other agencies implement public health laws passed by Congress through Federal Regulations. The CDPH has certain authorities to implement guidelines and mandates throughout California and may implement guidance to be stricter than the CDC guidance. California schools must follow CDPH guidelines, as well as CalOSHA guidelines for employees.