



## **End of the Public Health Emergency Declaration for COVID-19:**

### ***FAQ's for PreK-12 Schools***

Since President Biden's announcement earlier this year that the public health emergency will expire on May 11, the Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) has been working on plans to wind down some of the COVID-19 response initiatives that have been occurring in our state. One of those areas is in the development and delivery of state-specific guidance for COVID-19 prevention and response activities. Although state specific guidance was often needed early on in the pandemic when less information was readily available from federal agencies, our CT-specific guidance has largely mirrored guidance from federal agencies and professional medical societies for well over a year at this point.

As we approach the end of the school year, this FAQ document is being distributed to answer some of the lingering questions DPH and the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) have received in the past several months, and to pivot our reference for COVID-19 guidance in the future to the CDC's main COVID-19 information page, which can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/covid19>.

#### **1. Does the end of the Public Health Emergency Declaration mean that COVID-19 is no longer a concern?**

The end of the COVID-19 public health emergency does not mean the virus has been eradicated. It's still here, but we know better now how to manage it in our communities and in our lives. People can take simple actions like staying home when you're sick, washing your hands, covering your mouth when you cough or sneeze, and wearing a high-quality mask when levels in your community are high, and staying up-to-date on COVID-19 vaccines—these are all the ways we can continue to protect ourselves. At this point, we expect that COVID-19 will likely follow patterns similar to other seasonal illnesses, and we can expect to once again ramp up our efforts, including vaccination efforts and prevention campaigns, during respiratory disease season which typically runs from October through May.

#### **2. Should schools be continuing with increased cleaning and disinfection protocols at this time?**

DPH continues to recommend that schools engage in good universal cleaning practices, as would normally be expected to maintain a clean, safe, and healthy school environment. At this time, enhanced cleaning and disinfection practices for the purposes of preventing COVID-19 transmission are not necessary for schools. More information regarding good cleaning practices for schools can be found on the CDC website at <https://www.cdc.gov/hygiene/cleaning/facility.html>.

#### **3. Should schools be continuing with enhanced ventilation practices at this time?**

DPH continues to recommend that school ventilation practices follow guidance from the *American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers* (ASHRAE) pertaining to school buildings. These guidelines include recommendations for fresh air supplied to indoor spaces, filtration of recirculated air, as well as maintenance and monitoring considerations. More information regarding guidance for school building ventilation can be found at <https://www.ashrae.org/>.

**4. Do schools need to continue with quarantine and isolation of students who are exposed to a positive case or test positive themselves? Do we need to require masking for students returning after isolation?**

School districts are encouraged to follow CDC guidance as they develop their own policies regarding quarantine, isolation, and masking at this time. DPH recommends that, as with any illness, students and staff should be encouraged to stay home if they are exhibiting symptoms of an illness. Updated quarantine, isolation, and masking guidance from CDC can be found here:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-childcare-guidance.html>. DPH recommends that schools consider this guidance in the context of the learning and other needs of their communities when developing their individual policies.

**5. Should schools continue to require medical clearance for return to athletics for students with a recent COVID-19 diagnosis?**

School districts can develop their own policies regarding the need for documented medical clearance to return to athletic or other activities following a COVID-19 diagnosis. DPH recommends that, when considering their own policies, schools keep in mind recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics, which can be found here: <https://www.aap.org/>.

**6. Do schools need to continue reporting cases among students and staff to the DPH School Submissions portal?**

Yes. Schools should continue to report all cases (no matter which type of test returns the positive result) among students and staff they are aware of to the DPH School Submissions portal. Individual case reporting via the school submission will conclude at the end of the 2022-23 school year.

[DPH Submissions - Login Page \(ct.gov\)](#)

Any suspected or confirmed outbreak in a school setting is also immediately reportable by telephone to both DPH and the local health department where the school is located. Schools should continue to work closely with local public health to identify and investigate suspected outbreaks and implement mitigation strategies to limit disease transmission. [https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DPH/EEIP/Reportable-Disease-Forms/PD23\\_2023-12\\_27\\_2022-Final-Fillable-Form.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DPH/EEIP/Reportable-Disease-Forms/PD23_2023-12_27_2022-Final-Fillable-Form.pdf)