



September 4, 2020

Dear Parents and Guardians,

As we enter into this new school year, we are facing many challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. To say these times are unprecedented is an understatement and the challenges we have faced in 2020 are unlike any we have seen in recent history. Over the summer, the health district met with superintendents, headmasters and other school administrators to craft plans to reopen schools as safely as possible. Every district and school is different and, as such, they have all developed plans to meet the needs of each unique learning environment. Many have chosen hybrid or remote options or have made significant modifications to building configurations to accommodate students. All schools have approached this re-opening using guidance from the CDC, the Ohio Department of Health and Summit County Public Health.

One element of a safe reopening is the ability to quickly isolate sick individuals, evaluate their symptoms, test for disease and quarantine those that have been in close contact with the COVID-19 positive individual. This process is called contact tracing and is an effective tool to ensure disease is not spread in a school building. We have had many questions about contact tracing and would like to explain the process.

Contact tracing in schools is a partnership between the school and the health district. Parameters are set defining an exposure and the school is required to report both sick individuals and those who have been in contact with that person to the health district. Once reports are made, the health district verifies the positive result and begins contract tracing with the school. The school maintains attendance records, seating charts, rosters, and other methods of tracking to determine who may have been potentially exposed to the virus. When a child is at school they are usually not able to report who they have been in close contact with and parents do not have contact information for these students. This is why it is critical that the schools and parents cooperate in contact tracing to prevent the spread of disease in school buildings.

- If your child may have been exposed to a positive case, your information (date of exposure, student name, parent/guardian name, phone number) is required to be released to the health district for quarantine purposes.
- Quarantine generally lasts for 14 days. The purpose is to determine if a person who is well will become symptomatic. If a person who is in quarantine develops symptoms, they are required to isolate for 10 days from the date of the symptoms or from the date of the test, if they do not have symptoms, have an improvement in symptoms and be fever free for at least 24 hours before they may return to school.



- If your child is placed in quarantine, you can expect a call from SCPH about the requirements and the projected return date to school. You can also expect some form of communication from your school that there has been a positive case in the building.

A successful reopening depends on all of us taking the necessary precautions to limit the spread of COVID-19 in our schools. These include social distancing of at least 6 ft, wearing a mask, staying home when you are sick, and good hand hygiene. It is also very important at this time to limit your children from participating in events outside of school such as sleepovers, dinners out before games, and ride sharing. Just because they are in school or sports together, it does not mean they should engage in these more risky activities that will increase the likelihood of viral spread.

If you have any questions about COVID-19 you can contact our call center at 926-5600 or visit our website at www.scph.org.

Sincerely,



Donna R. Skoda, MS, RD, LD
Health Commissioner

