

Voorhees Township Public Schools
Office of the Superintendent; Dr. David Gentile

October 27, 2020

Dear Parents & Guardians,

I hope this letter finds you well. This school year has been different than any other year. Our staff and students have adapted and continue to make the best out of a challenging situation. I want to commend our students for their efforts to wear their face coverings properly and maintain social distance when interacting with others at school. I am asked how we respond when notified of a positive case of COVID-19. I would like to share the following information in an effort to be transparent about the process and rationale behind our response to a reported positive COVID-19 case. I have included frequently asked questions and answers. Thank you for your continued support and understanding during this unprecedented time.

Purpose: The following is intended to provide information for our parents & guardians related to our response to a report of a positive case of COVID-19. It is intended to help provide a rationale for how the district administration and Camden County Health Department collaborate to respond to a reported positive COVID-19 test result of a student, staff member, and household contacts. Although each incident must be reviewed independently and handled on a case by case basis, there are general protocols consistent with every reported positive case. ** This is not to serve as medical advice, and anyone with symptoms should seek medical attention immediately. Once again, each case must be handled independently based on its unique circumstances.*

What happens when...

- 1. There is a report to the building principal of a positive test result for COVID-19.**
 - a. When the principal receives notification that a staff member or student in their care has tested positive for COVID-19, the information

gathering process begins. Before contacting the Camden County Health Department, the principal must gather the following information: positive test confirmation, names/contact information of the positive individual and the names/contact information for those in contact with the positive person. The principal also secures a seating chart and summary of the context around how others have interacted with the positive individual, including whether face coverings were worn faithfully, was social distancing observed, and whether any contacts might qualify as a 'close contact.' Once this information is gathered, the superintendent contacts the Camden County Health Department representative to review and discuss the information provided.

- b. We collaborate and determine what the best course of action is. The first step is to typically begin contacting those individuals who are impacted directly and indirectly by the positive test result. This is done with every effort to maintain confidentiality while also being as transparent as possible. Those identified as close contacts will be required to quarantine, therefore, they are notified first before the general information letter is sent.
- 2. The building principal learns that a teacher, staff member, or student has a family member who has tested positive for COVID-19.**
 - a. The individual is required to quarantine. See the attached chart from the NJ Health Department for greater detail. In general, if a family member tests positive for COVID-19, the school community individual will be required to quarantine for 10 days from the positive test date plus an additional 14 days.
- 3. After a positive case has been identified and the Camden County Health Department has been notified.**
 - a. We work with the Camden County Health Department to determine the best actions available to increase the likelihood of stopping or reducing the spread of the virus. This depends on the date the positive individual was last in school and with whom they interacted. There are scenarios where we require only the cohort to quarantine and others where we require the entire class to quarantine for a period of time. In select scenarios, it may be necessary to place an entire school

on remote learning. We take the most practical and cautious approach to ensure the safety of the students and staff. We are in uncharted territory where the correct path is often unclear. We work with the health department to make the best decision possible with the available information to us at the time.

What you can do to protect your child from exposure while in school?

1. There are several steps your child can take to reduce risk of exposure.

- a. Wear your face covering at all times! Collectively, if everyone takes this action step we drastically reduce our risk of exposure. If you must be without your face covering, remain socially distant.
- b. Maintain social distancing from staff and students even when wearing your face coverings. If you must be inside the social distancing space, keep that time limited. Remember, when you are within 6 feet of an individual for a period of time totaling 15 minutes or longer within a 24 hour period you become a ‘close contact’. If there is a report of a positive case, being their ‘close contact’ increases your risk of exposure and likelihood of being required to quarantine. Since you cannot predict who may test positive in the future, work to avoid being a close contact.
- c. Practice good hygiene practices, i.e. handwashing, avoid sharing items.
- d. Monitor your child’s health and report symptoms to your building principal immediately. If they are not feeling well and demonstrating symptoms associated with COVID-19 please stay home.
- e. Report if any household member is positive for COVID-19 and do not send your child to school.
- f. Report if your child has been exposed to someone positive for COVID-19 and do not send your child to school.

Frequently Asked Questions:

- 1. What happens if my child has been exposed to a positive COVID-19 individual?** If your child is determined to be a ‘close contact’ you will receive a phone call from the principal or their designee informing you of the contact and that your child must be quarantined. You will be advised of the required quarantine period.
- 2. What if my child was a close contact and is being required to quarantine, should my other children (siblings) quarantine as well?** You are called because your child is a close contact to someone in their class who tested positive for COVID-19 and therefore that child needs to quarantine. That child’s siblings do not have to quarantine as they are not close contacts with a positive case of COVID-19.
- 3. What if my child or someone in my household tests positive for COVID-19, who should quarantine and for how long?** If any member of your household tests positive for COVID-19 all other household members must quarantine. The positive person quarantines for 10 days after their positive test if they are asymptomatic. If the positive person is symptomatic, they are to quarantine for 10 days after their symptoms end without the help of fever reducing medication. The household contacts must quarantine for an additional 14 days beyond the 10 days of the positive person. This is a total of 24 calendar days of quarantine for members in a household where a member of the household tests positive for COVID-19.
- 4. What if my child is required to quarantine, does that mean they should also not engage in any extracurricular activities?** Yes, when you are required to quarantine you should avoid contact with anyone outside of your household.
- 5. While in school, are the children and staff members wearing a mask, observing social distancing, and practicing good hygiene?** Yes, all individuals in our schools wear their masks at all times. The exception is during snack time. During snack time, students are seated at least 6ft apart and have their protective desk shield up. During the normal school day, everyone wears their masks at all times and every effort is made to maintain social distancing and practice good hygiene.
- 6. Why is it that sometimes I learn about a positive case from the rumor before the school district announces it?** When we are informed of a

positive case of COVID-19, we must contact the Camden County Health Department for verification and guidance. Additionally, we must gather information to determine all potential ‘close contacts’. This process takes time but is important. Therefore, before we make a formal announcement, we must verify the facts as thoroughly as possible.

7. What if my child is not feeling well but I suspect it is likely just allergies or something other than COVID-19, should I send my child to school?

No, the current hybrid schedule allows your child to participate remotely until they are symptom free. It is best if we do not take any unnecessary risks.

8. I was in contact with Mr. Positive, why wasn’t I required to quarantine?

When our staff and students come to school, they wear their face coverings at all times and observe social distancing when around others. The exceptions may include when the students have snack time or when staff are having lunch. During those times, when students or staff remove their masks to eat, they are to be seated at least 6 feet away from one another. Students have been provided desk shields that serve as another layer of protection during snack time. The only time when you may be required to quarantine is when you have been engaged in behavior that qualifies you to be a ‘close contact.’ According to the NJ Department of Health (updated 10/2020) the definition of a ‘close contact’ is any individual who was within 6 feet of a COVID-19 positive case for a cumulative period of time (a total of 15 minutes or more) within a 24 hour time period or had direct contact with the infectious secretions of a COVID-19 case (e.g., were coughed on). Walking past a COVID-19 case or just being in the same building does NOT qualify as close contact.

9. ‘Mr. Positive’ wife tested positive for COVID-19 and is now quarantining. Why wasn’t his entire class or those around him made to quarantine?’ Only those individuals who are in direct contact with the positive case as a close contact or household contact need to quarantine.