

SUPPLEMENTAL K-12 SCHOOL GUIDANCE: 2021-22 SCHOOL YEAR

SACRAMENTO COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH (SCPH) | SEPTEMBER 23, 2021

All public, private, and charter K-12 schools in Sacramento County should read, understand, and abide by all tenets of [CDPH Guidance for K-12 Schools in California, 2021-22 School Year](#) and associated [Q&A](#). The SCPH guidance below is designed to supplement CDPH guidance and provide best practices for schools in Sacramento County.

ASSIGNED SEATING

To facilitate effective contact tracing, schools should have consistent, assigned seating. Schools should maintain accurate classroom seating charts, including approximate average distance between seats, and make them accessible to designated contact tracing staff.

BACK TO SCHOOL NIGHT/OPEN HOUSE

Due to the potential for crowded classrooms, extensive mixing, and contact tracing challenges, SCPH recommends that Back to School Nights, Open House, or other similar events be conducted virtually.

BAND, DRAMA, & MUSIC

CDPH K-12 guidance and State and local Health Orders require face coverings indoors at K-12 schools. This includes participation in indoor activities such as band, music, or drama. For activities where face coverings cannot be worn (e.g. singing, playing wind instruments), SCPH recommends the activity be conducted outdoors.

DANCES

Sacramento County Public Health cautions against hosting dances or similar gatherings. Schools or other youth organizations that choose to host or sponsor a dance should, at minimum, follow these guidelines:

- Conduct all activities outdoors
- Require proof of full vaccination or negative COVID-19 test within 72 hours of the event for all attendees and chaperones
- Require face coverings for all attendees and chaperones
- If serving food or beverages, designate a separate space where physical distancing can be maintained when eating or drinking

Schools should also be aware of the unique challenges associated with contact tracing at events of this nature, which could lead to quarantining large numbers of students and/or staff. Students identified as close contacts at a dance are **not** eligible for modified quarantine.

FACE COVERINGS

CDPH K-12 guidance and State and local Health Orders require face coverings indoors at K-12 schools. Face coverings are strongly recommended in outdoor settings where distancing is not

practical or possible. CDPH has posted a [letter to school leaders](#) regarding the Requirement for Universal Masking Indoors at K-12 Schools.

FIELD TRIPS

Due to high levels of COVID-19 community transmission locally, schools should consider delaying field trips until local case rates improve.

INDIVIDUAL OR SMALL GROUP SERVICES

For individual or small group services such as counseling, speech therapy, psychological services, intervention, etc., maintain physical distance of 6 feet or greater between provider(s) and participant(s), as much as possible.

LUNCH/SNACK/MEALTIME

Lunch or snack time has the potential to be one of the higher risk activities during the school day since students will be unmasked while eating and drinking. To minimize risks during mealtime, consider having students eat outdoors or in other spaces where they can spread out such as classrooms, as feasible.

Consistent seating during mealtimes is also recommended as it minimizes potential exposures and facilitates easier and more effective contact tracing.

In the event of potential COVID-19 exposure, students sitting within 6 feet of one another during lunch/snack/mealtime will be considered unmasked close contacts.

MEDICAL EXEMPTIONS FOR FACE COVERINGS

The Medical Board of California has [informed licensees](#) that issuing fraudulent medical exemptions for face coverings may subject them to disciplinary action. Of note, the President of the California Medical Association stated, “There are very few medical reasons and situations that would exempt an individual from masking requirements. It strains credulity to think that a single physician would have dozens or hundreds of patients with valid medical claims for such an exemption...”

Schools/districts that receive numerous exemptions from a single medical provider or have other reason to suspect a provider may be issuing fraudulent exemptions should notify Sacramento County Public Health. Red flags include exemptions from a provider outside of the immediate area or an exemption that includes non-medical or ideological rationale (e.g. “COVID-19 is not real” or “masks are more harmful than COVID-19”).

MODIFIED QUARANTINE

Modified quarantine is limited to students whose mask-on-mask exposure occurred **at school** (both case and contact were masked). Students who are identified as a close contact due to exposure outside of the school are subject to regular quarantine requirements.

Modified quarantine eligibility and participation can extend to before/after school programs if the before/after school program:

- a) is supervised by school staff (or staff who are under the authority of school administration) who are in compliance with the CDPH Health Order for [Vaccine Verification for Workers in Schools](#) **and**
- b) follows all of the same COVID-19 mitigation protocols as the rest of the school, including assigned seating and universal indoor masking **and**
- c) program staff can verify that masks were worn properly for the duration of the exposure,

All requirements of modified quarantine as outlined in [CDPH Guidance for K-12 Schools in California, 2021-22 School Year](#) must still be satisfied. This allowance is limited to before/after school programs and does not extend to extracurricular activities or athletics.

Teachers and staff are **not** eligible for modified quarantine.

NON-ESSENTIAL EVENTS (RALLIES, ASSEMBLIES, ETC.)

To maximize the ability to have as many students participating in in-person instruction, SCPH recommends against holding non-essential large events such as rallies, festivals, assemblies, etc. where large numbers of students will gather and contact tracing is difficult. These have the potential to facilitate COVID-19 spread and cause students to miss in-person instruction due to isolation or quarantine.

PHYSICAL DISTANCING

There are no minimum physical distancing requirements in schools, but schools should make every effort to maximize physical distancing in all settings as long as such efforts do not interfere with full time attendance for all students.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION (PE)

CDPH K-12 guidance and State and local Health Orders require face coverings indoors at K-12 schools. Masks are not required outdoors, but schools should consider requiring or strongly encouraging them, especially in situations where students and/or staff will be in close contact with each other, including when practicing or playing contact sports.

Potential for close contact varies greatly by sport. Consider lower contact sports (e.g. volleyball, golf, track, yoga) in lieu of higher contact sports (e.g. Greco-Roman wrestling, football, basketball, ballroom dancing).

POOR AIR QUALITY/SMOKE

Schools should balance the COVID-19 prevention benefits of ventilation and outdoor activity with the outdoor air quality. On days when air quality is poor, schools should consider moving

outdoor activities indoors or cancelling them doing so would create a risk for COVID-19 transmission. Windows and doors should be kept closed and HVAC systems should be adjusted to prevent outdoor air from being pulled into building, if possible.

QUARANTINE RECOMMENDATIONS

SCPH quarantine recommendations may vary based on the extent to which school personnel are able to conduct detailed contact tracing (identify close contacts, describe extent of mask usage, etc.). In the absence of detailed contract tracing information, expect quarantine recommendations to be broader and include a larger number of potential contacts.

RAPID TESTING CAPACITY

Onsite rapid testing at schools can have many benefits, including the ability to meet the twice weekly testing requirements for students in modified quarantine. Onsite rapid testing also facilitates faster:

- decisions about quarantine and isolation
- identification of the extent of outbreaks
- parental notification regarding cases/outbreaks on campus

Schools interested in adding rapid testing capacity can [request technical assistance](#) from CDPH.

Community testing sites and medical providers are impacted by community demand for testing. They are unlikely to have capacity to conduct the frequent testing needed for modified quarantine and will not be a good long-term solution for this purpose. The same is true for unvaccinated school workers who need regular testing.

Due to a national rapid testing kit supply shortage, schools relying on rapid antigen testing should expect testing operations to be impacted. The State of California is working to identify additional supplies and has prioritized schools to receive the bulk of existing supplies in hopes of minimizing impacts of this shortage on schools. Schools should consider strategies to conserve existing supplies. Recommendations include:

- Reserve rapid antigen kits for students who are participating in modified quarantine.
- Test symptomatic individuals using PCR tests. Individuals who are symptomatic should be excluded from school while symptomatic. They also require a follow-up PCR test if testing negative with a rapid antigen kit.
- When testing unvaccinated staff to comply with the [CDPH Health Order Vaccine Verification for Workers in Schools](#), use PCR tests. Encourage unvaccinated staff to get vaccinated so they do not require routine testing.

RECESS/OUTDOOR ACTIVITY

Masks are not required outdoors, but schools should consider requiring or strongly encouraging them, especially in situations where students and/or staff will be in close contact with each other.

Consider maintaining stable cohorts during recess by staggering recess periods by class or designating different outdoor spaces for different classes to limit mixing.

In situations where a student who tests positive for COVID-19 was in the presence of others in outdoor settings (e.g. recess), schools should make their best effort to identify anyone who meets the criteria for a close contact (within 6 feet for more than 15 minutes in a 24 hour period) and to what extent the affected parties were masked during the interaction.

Close contacts in the outdoor setting should be treated the same as indoor close contacts with regard to quarantine recommendations.

REPORTING CASES AND CONTACTS

California law (17 C.C.R. section 2508) requires anyone in charge of a K-12 public or private school to report the presence or suspected presence of any reportable communicable disease, including COVID-19, to the local health officer. Cases of COVID-19 and their known contacts must be submitted within 24 hours of becoming aware of the case ([CDPH](#)).

All cases of COVID-19 and their close contacts must be reported using the online contact tracing reporting portal for schools. [Learn more about the SCPH Qualtrics Reporting Portal for Schools.](#)

SPORTS

CDPH K-12 guidance and State and local Health Orders require face coverings indoors at K-12 schools, including when practicing or playing sports (excluding water sports). Masks are not required outdoors, but schools should consider requiring or strongly encouraging them, especially in situations where students and/or staff will be in close contact with each other, including when practicing or playing contact sports.

There is no testing requirement for sports at this time, however given the close contact involved with many sports and the large number of youth sports-related outbreaks in spring 2021, **routine testing for youth sports participants is strongly recommended.**

Close contacts in the outdoor setting should be treated the same as indoor close contacts with regard to quarantine recommendations.

Limit locker room usage. Face coverings are required in all indoor spaces, including locker rooms, with the exception of when showering. Encourage participants to shower at home, if possible.

Spectators are required to wear face coverings in indoor settings. Spectators should be strongly encouraged to wear face coverings in outdoor settings where distancing is not practical or possible. Proof of vaccination or a negative test result within the past 72 hours is strongly recommended for all spectators attending indoor or outdoor sporting events where distancing is not practical or possible.

Schools should be aware of the additional risk associated with sports team travel and multi-team tournaments. Recommended precautions include:

- When traveling in vehicles with other members of the youth sports team not from the same household, wear masks during the entire trip and keep windows open. This includes when carpooling in family vehicles.
- When traveling overnight, it is recommended that team members not from the same household sleep in separate rooms and keep masks on whenever visiting other members' hotel rooms.
- Socializing with other teams is strongly discouraged.

VACCINATION

It is strongly recommended that students 12 and older and school staff are fully vaccinated. Vaccination against COVID-19 is FREE and available for everyone 12 years of age and older. Vaccination is the primary strategy to reduce the burden of COVID-19 disease and protect all members of the community. Vaccination provides excellent protection against severe illness, hospitalization, and death. Vaccination clinics are widely available throughout Sacramento County at numerous pop-up clinics, medical providers, and retail pharmacies. Schools can also partner with vaccine providers to host vaccine clinics on their campus for students, their families, and the community. For information on clinics, visit myturn.ca.gov or <http://bit.ly/SacCountyVaccine>.

UPDATES

8/6/2021

- Initial version

8/27/2021

- Added CDPH letter to school leaders regarding universal masking
- Added guidance on individual and specialty services
- Added guidance on close contacts during times when students are eating
- Added guidance on medical exemptions for face coverings

- Added guidance on poor air quality
- Updated rapid testing guidance
- Added guidance on reporting cases and contacts
- Updated sports guidance to emphasize strong recommendation for routine testing and add protocols for locker rooms and spectators
- Added vaccination recommendations

9/22/2021

- Added dance guidance
- Updated modified quarantine guidance to include allowances for before/after school programs
- Added recommendations for conserving rapid antigen test kit supplies
- Added recommendations for sports team travel and tournaments