

FAQ – Contact Tracing

What is contact tracing?

Contact tracing is used by health departments to prevent the spread of infectious diseases. In general, contact tracing involves identifying people who have a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19 (cases) and people who they came in contact with (close contacts) and working with them to interrupt disease spread. This includes asking people with COVID-19 to **isolate** and their contacts to **quarantine** at home voluntarily.

Who is a close contact?

A close contact is anyone (with or without a face covering) who was within 6 feet of a confirmed case of COVID-19 (with or without a face covering), for at least 15 minutes throughout the course of a day. The period of close contact begins 2 calendar days before the onset of symptoms (for a symptomatic person) or 2 calendar days before the positive sample was obtained (for an asymptomatic person). If the case was symptomatic (e.g., coughing, sneezing), persons with briefer periods of exposure may also be considered contacts. Close contacts to a confirmed case of COVID-19 are required to remain in quarantine at home for 14 calendar days starting from the last day of contact with the confirmed case.

Who will do contact tracing?

Contact tracing will be performed by the Local Health Department (LHD), sometimes in partnership with DPH or a community-based organization. However, schools can assist the LHD by identifying all close contacts with a confirmed case. Documentation of assigned seats and taking photos of assembled classes can be useful in helping schools determine who was within 6 feet of a given case.

Schools must be aware of records and confidentiality laws pertaining to school student records, including exceptions for release of information in the event of an emergency and requirements to notify parents and create a record of emergency releases of information. (105 ILCS 10/6(a)(7); 23 Il. Admin. Code 375.60).

Is contact tracing only performed when a positive test is received?

Contact tracing is performed for a confirmed case (laboratory confirmed positive) or a probable case (person with clinically compatible COVID-like symptoms and epidemiologically linked (known exposure) to a confirmed case or testing positive by an antigen test).

If a confirmed or probable COVID case is identified in a classroom, or on a school bus, who will be considered close contacts that need to be quarantined for 14 calendar days? Will this include the entire classroom or all the students on the bus?

Exposure in a classroom should be limited to everyone with whom the confirmed or probable COVID case had close contact, within 6 feet, for at least 15 minutes throughout the course of a day.

Exposure on a bus must include everyone who sat within 6 feet of the confirmed or probable COVID case for 15 minutes or longer. A

possible approach to identifying close contacts on a bus would be to include persons who sat 3 rows in front and 3 rows behind the confirmed or probable COVID case.

If the close contact and the COVID case were both wearing their cloth face coverings when the exposure occurred, is the close contact still required to be quarantined?

Yes. While there is strong evidence that face coverings significantly reduce the risk of infection, the likelihood for transmission cannot be ruled out.

Is a physician's note required to return to school after a 'close contact' to a case completes 14 calendar days in quarantine?

Persons who remain asymptomatic throughout 14 calendar days of quarantine do not need a physician's note to return to school. During the quarantine period, a contact tracer will be closely monitoring the contact to confirm they remain asymptomatic.

What is the definition of an outbreak in schools?

Two confirmed cases of COVID-19 infections occurring within 14 calendar days of each other in individuals in the same classroom would meet the case definition for an outbreak. This is because the cases would be epidemiologically linked (known exposure to) with respect to place (same classroom) and time (within 14 calendar days). This would prompt an investigation by the LHD that may result in recommendations for testing and quarantining all students/staff in the affected classroom.