



## Public Health Interim Guidance for Local Health Departments and Pre-K-12 Schools - COVID-19 Exclusion Protocols

This guidance document provides additional guidance for schools and Local Health Departments (LHDs) for when students, faculty or staff must be excluded from school consistent with [Executive Order 2021-24](#) and the Communicable Disease Code, [77 Ill. Admin. Cod 690.361](#) and [690.30\(c\)](#).

### Definitions:

- “School Personnel” means any person who (1) is employed by, volunteers for, or is contracted to provide services for, any public and nonpublic school in Illinois serving pre-kindergarten through 12th grade students, or is employed by an entity contracted to provide services for any public and nonpublic school in Illinois serving pre-kindergarten through 12th grade students, and (2) is in close contact (fewer than 6 feet) with other persons on the campus or in a campus-affiliated building or location for more than 15 minutes at least once a week on a regular basis. The term “School Personnel” does not include any person who is present on the campus or at an affiliated off-campus location for only a short period of time and whose moments of close physical proximity to others on site are fleeting (e.g., contractors making deliveries to a site where they remain physically distanced from others or briefly enter a site to pick up a shipment).
- “Student” means an adolescent or child enrolled in a school.
- “Confirmed Case” means a person with a positive result on a COVID-19 molecular amplification diagnostic test (e.g. Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test), irrespective of clinical signs and symptoms.
- “Close Contact” means an unvaccinated individual who was within 6 feet for at least 15 minutes with a Confirmed or Probable Case in a 24-hour period. The term close contact does not include a student who was within 3-6 feet in a classroom setting for least 15 minutes with a Confirmed Case or Probable Case if both case and contact were consistently masked for the entire exposure period. Close contact does not include individuals who are fully vaccinated or who tested positive for COVID-19 within prior 90 days and are currently asymptomatic.
- “Probable Case” means a person with a positive result on a COVID-19 antigen diagnostic test, irrespective of clinical signs and symptoms, or with COVID-19-like symptoms who was exposed to a Confirmed or Probable Case.

### **Situation #1 - Students, Faculty or Staff Tests Positive (Confirmed Case): Exclude from In-Person Instruction**

- If a COVID-19 test is performed at the school or the individual self-reports a positive test, the school should report the case immediately by phone to the LHD. 77 Ill. Admin. Code 690.200(a)(1)(J).
- Schools must gather information about the individual's activity in school to provide such information to the LHD. Notification should include all available information about the individual's movements and potential exposures to others within the school beginning with the 48 hours prior to the positive test result or symptom onset. This includes:
  - Total number of students/school personnel at the school and total number of classrooms
  - Total number of classrooms impacted
  - Total number of students and staff potentially exposed
  - The COVID-19-positive individual's reported/observed onset date of symptoms
  - The COVID-19-positive individual's last day at the school
- School Next Steps:
  - Exclude student or school personnel who are Confirmed Cases from the school consistent with the flow chart #1 below or as otherwise recommended by the LHD.
  - If the COVID-19-positive individual was in the school during their infectious period (48 hours prior to symptom onset for a symptomatic person or 48 hours before specimen collection for an asymptomatic person through the date of last attendance), areas used by the individual should be cleaned and disinfected thoroughly according to [CDC guidelines](#) and as described below.
  - Notify families, teachers, and support staff that a Confirmed Case was identified in the school while maintaining confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ACA) and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. The notification should be sent as soon as possible and include information on symptom monitoring, what to do if symptoms develop, COVID-19 prevention strategies, and information on what the school/day care is doing in response to the positive case. Such notification shall also specify that exclusion from school is separate from any isolation or quarantine order that may be entered by the LHD.
  - Exclude students and school personnel identified as Close Contacts by school or LHD consistent with flowchart #3 or as otherwise recommended by the LHD.
- LHD Next Steps:
  - Contact the COVID-19-positive School Personnel or the parents/guardians of the COVID-19-positive student to complete the investigation and issue an order for isolation, if necessary.
  - Conduct contact tracing to identify Close Contacts to the case and advise close contacts to remain in home away from others consistent with the flow chart #3.
  - Issue orders for quarantine for close contacts to the case as necessary per the [Communicable Disease Code, 77 Ill. Admin Code 690, Subpart I.](#) Orders of

quarantine do not supplant the school's authority in excluding students/staff determined to be close contacts pursuant to the Executive Order or the [Communicable Disease Code, 77 Ill. Admin. Code 690](#).

- Criteria for Returning to School
  - Consistent with the CDC's [Discontinuation of Isolation](#) schools should permit students and school personnel who are Confirmed or Probable Cases to return to in-person instruction if at least 10 days have passed since symptom onset date (or date of test if asymptomatic) and they have been fever-free for 24 hours without fever-reducing medication and their symptoms have improved.
  - The LHD may supply alternative dates as to when a student or staff member can return to school; otherwise schools should permit return consistent with this guidance unless an isolation or quarantine order is still in effect.
  - A letter from Local Health Department releasing the student or staff member from isolation or quarantine is not required for a school to permit a student or school member to return.

**Situation #2 - Students and School Personnel Exhibiting COVID-like symptoms at School: Exclude or Refuse Admission While Acute Symptoms are Present**

- Students or School Personnel who exhibit [COVID-19-like symptom\(s\)](#) should be immediately masked, if they are not already, and sent to a designated separation room that can be used for symptom evaluation, including testing if available, or while waiting until they can leave the school
- [COVID-19-like symptoms](#) include the following: Fever (100.4°F or higher), new onset of moderate to severe headache, shortness of breath, new cough, sore throat, vomiting, diarrhea, new loss of sense of taste or smell, fatigue from unknown cause, muscle or body aches from unknown cause
- Students and school personnel exhibiting [COVID-19 like symptoms](#) should be:
  - safely transported home by parent or guardian as soon as possible, or
  - safely transported by parent or guardian to a healthcare facility for clinical evaluation and testing, if necessary.
- On-Site Screening (if school health personnel available)
  - Any school health personnel conducting a screening of a symptomatic student should be wearing fit tested N95 mask, eye protection with face shield or goggles, gown and gloves. The user should be trained on the type of PPE required, and how to don (put on) and doff (remove) it correctly and safely. Respirators such as N95s must be used as part of a [written respiratory protection program](#). OSHA requires that N95 masks be fit tested prior to use. This is an important step to ensure a tight fit for the mask to be effective in providing protection. Schools should contact their LHD to determine where fit testing can be obtained in their area.

- If a fit-tested N95 respirator is not available, the next safest levels of respiratory protection include, in the following order: a non-fit-tested N95 respirator, a KN95 respirator on the [FDA-approved list](#), or a surgical mask.
- Testing
  - When possible, the sick individual should be tested on-site at the school for COVID-19 and other respiratory viruses, where indicated.
  - Individuals who have had COVID-19 with a lab confirmed test within the past 3 months who are now symptomatic do not need to be tested for COVID-19 and should be assessed for other illnesses.
- Exclusion:
  - Schools must exclude or refuse to admit students and school personnel with COVID-like illness:
    - If COVID-19-negative, the student or school personnel should remain out of school until they have been fever-free for 24 hours without fever-reducing medication, 48 hours after diarrhea/vomiting have ceased, and symptoms have improved.
    - If the student or school personnel test COVID-19-positive, refer to the section, **“Situation #1 - Procedures for Students and School Personnel who Test Positive.”**
    - If testing is not performed, the child must remain out of school for 10 calendar days after symptom onset and until they have been fever free for 24 hours without fever-reducing medication, 48 hours after diarrhea/vomiting have ceased, and symptoms have improved.
- Schools must exclude unvaccinated household members of the symptomatic student or school personnel unless the sick individual was tested within 24 hours of onset of symptoms. If the ill individual was tested within 24 hours of onset of symptoms, household members do not need to be sent home unless there is a high suspicion the ill person has COVID-19 (e.g., they are a known Close Contact, they have lost sense of taste and smell). Pending test results (if test performed within first 24 hours), household members can remain in school with consistent use of well-fitting masks both indoors and outdoors. If the ill household member tests positive for COVID-19, then any unvaccinated household members should be excluded from the school immediately and treated as a close contact (refer to Situation #3). Asymptomatic household members who previously tested positive for COVID-19 do not need to be excluded if it has been fewer than 90 days since the date symptoms began or the date of specimen collection (if they were asymptomatic).
- All areas used by the sick individual should be cleaned and disinfected thoroughly according to [CDC guidelines](#) and as described below.

**Situation #3 - Students and School Personnel who are Close Contacts to a Confirmed COVID-19 Case:**

- Identifying Close Contacts

- Schools shall investigate confirmed and suspect cases of COVID-19 in schools to identify Close Contacts.
- Districts and schools, as well as students and families, must work with their LHD to facilitate contact tracing of infectious students and school personnel.
- Upon notification or identification of a Confirmed Case in the school, schools/ should prepare and provide information and records to the LHD to aid in the identification of potential Close Contacts, exposure sites, and mitigation recommendations.
- School personnel should inform the LHDs immediately about possible exposures within the school, including in transportation settings, classrooms, common areas and extracurricular activities. Schools cares should designate a person or persons for this role and have them available after hours.
- LHDs should collaborate with PreK-12 school administration to obtain contact information of unvaccinated individuals who were in rooms, classes, meals, and extracurricular activities with the Confirmed Case.
- The LHD will conduct contact tracing to identify close contacts to the case outside of the school, and may recommend exclusion pursuant to [77 Ill. Admin. Code 690.30](#) or issuing orders for voluntary quarantine per the [Communicable Disease Code, 77 Ill. Admin Code 690, Subpart I.](#)
- Factors that may be considered when identifying close contacts include proximity, the duration of exposure (e.g., longer exposure time likely increases exposure risk), and whether the exposure was to a person with symptoms (e.g., coughing likely increases exposure risk). Brief interactions are less likely to result in transmission; however, symptoms and the type of interaction (e.g., did the infected person cough directly into the face of the exposed individual) remain important. Schools should work with the LHD for additional guidance in particular situations if needed.
- Schools Must Exclude Close Contacts
  - Schools must handle contacts of infectious disease cases as required by [77 Ill. Admin. Code 690.30](#) or as recommended by the LHD.
  - Schools must exclude students or school personnel identified as Close Contacts consistent with flowchart #3 unless directed otherwise by the LHD.
  - Schools should exclude students even if an isolation or quarantine order has not been issued or has expired.
- Individuals who do not need to be excluded:
  - Asymptomatic individuals with prior COVID-19 disease if it has been fewer than 90 days since the date symptoms began or the date of specimen collection if they were asymptomatic.
  - Students and staff who are fully vaccinated with no COVID-19-like symptoms CDC recommends that fully vaccinated individuals test three to five days after a close contact exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19.

- LHDs should interview the parents/guardians of a COVID-19-positive student or COVID-19-positive school personnel. The purpose for the interview is to identify everyone with whom the COVID-19-positive individual had close contact (within 6 feet for a cumulative 15 minutes or more while the individual was infectious) to identify additional individuals who should be excluded from school and/or subject to an order for isolation or quarantine.
  - The infectious period begins 2 days before the onset of symptoms (for a symptomatic person) or 2 days before the positive sample was obtained (for an asymptomatic person) and ends when the COVID-19-positive individual was placed in isolation.
- Parents/guardians and staff must cooperate with the LHD for purposes of conducting contact tracing or investigating any outbreak pursuant to the Control of Communicable Disease Code, [77 Illinois Administrative Code 690](#).
- Return to school criteria
  - If the Close Contact develops symptoms, COVID-19 diagnostic testing is recommended, regardless of vaccination status, and the school/day care should follow protocols for excluding symptomatic individuals from school for 14 days (Situation #2).
  - If the Close Contact is not tested, they are treated as a Probable Case (Situation #2).
  - If the Close Contact tests positive, they should be treated as a confirmed case (Situation #1).
  - If the close contact tests positive but remains asymptomatic, all unvaccinated close contacts are recommended to be tested between 5-7 days after exposure to a positive case.
  - The Local Health Department may supply dates as to when a student or staff member identified as a close contact can return to school, otherwise schools should permit return consistent with this guidance (14 days).
  - A letter from LHD releasing the student or staff member from isolation or quarantine, or specifying the student is permitted to return is not required.

**Situation #4 - Outbreak Response and Consideration for Closure:**

- Identifying an outbreak:
  - An outbreak is defined as two cases that are linked epidemiologically with respect to person, place, and time. In other words, the two cases have shared close contacts and location and have onsets within 14 calendar days of each other. Conversely, two cases that occurred in different time frames (at least calendar 15 days apart), separate locations, and having no common source of exposure would not constitute an outbreak.
- Outbreak strategies. Once an outbreak is identified, the LHD will further investigate to determine the extent of exposures at the school/day care and what control measures are needed to mitigate the outbreak. Such strategies might include:

- Quarantine orders from the LHD for all individuals present in the affected classroom, especially for infant and toddler classrooms where masking is not achievable and social distancing is challenging.
- Temporarily suspending in-person learning only for classrooms exposed to COVID-19 cases.
- Closing playgrounds.
- Canceling non-essential activities and meetings.
- Keeping students in stable class groups or classrooms and moving teachers between classes, if necessary.
- Increasing spacing between students in classes.
- Shortening the in-person school week.
- Staggering school/day care start and lunch/break times across year groups or classes.
- Testing
  - When a school is in outbreak status (as defined and established by public health authorities), outbreak testing is strongly recommended for students and required for unvaccinated school personnel who are included in the outbreak.
  - Outbreak testing should begin as soon as possible from the date the outbreak is declared by the LHD and at least within three days.
  - IDPH recommends schools acquire parental consent for student testing at the beginning of the school year to quickly accommodate outbreak testing should the need arise.
  - Schools should conduct twice weekly testing of unvaccinated students during an outbreak targeted to the impacted classroom(s), grade(s), extracurricular participants, or entire student body, depending on the circumstances, unless the local health department recommends otherwise.
  - Schools must conduct twice weekly testing of unvaccinated school personnel who are included in the outbreak definition established by public health authorities.
  - Testing should continue until the school has gone two incubation periods, or 28 days, without identifying any new cases.
  - Schools should make plans to deploy outbreak testing when needed. A listing of free testing sites is available at <http://dph.illinois.gov/testing>.
- Decisions about taking an adaptive pause in response to an outbreak should be made in consultation with the LHD. Schools and LHDs should consider vaccination levels, number of students in quarantine, ability of the LHD and school to effectively contact trace, adherence to all layers of mitigations (in particular exclusion, isolation, universal masking and testing), and availability of staff to conduct in-person learning.

**Situation #1 - Students, Faculty or Support Staff Tests Positive**

**School Response**

**9/20/2021**

Student/School Staff member tests positive for SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19)

**School must** send home student/staff **or have** transported by parent/guardian (as applicable) for further medical evaluation by healthcare provider.

**School should** implement cleaning and disinfection of areas where case may have been present as per [CDC guidance](#).

**School should** notify families, teachers, and staff that a confirmed case was identified in the school/day care, as soon as possible, while maintaining confidentiality.

Include information on symptom monitoring, what to do if symptoms develop, COVID-19 prevention strategies, and information on what the school/day care is doing in response to the positive case.

**School should** identify and exclude individuals identified as close contacts by school or LHD (see Situation #2)

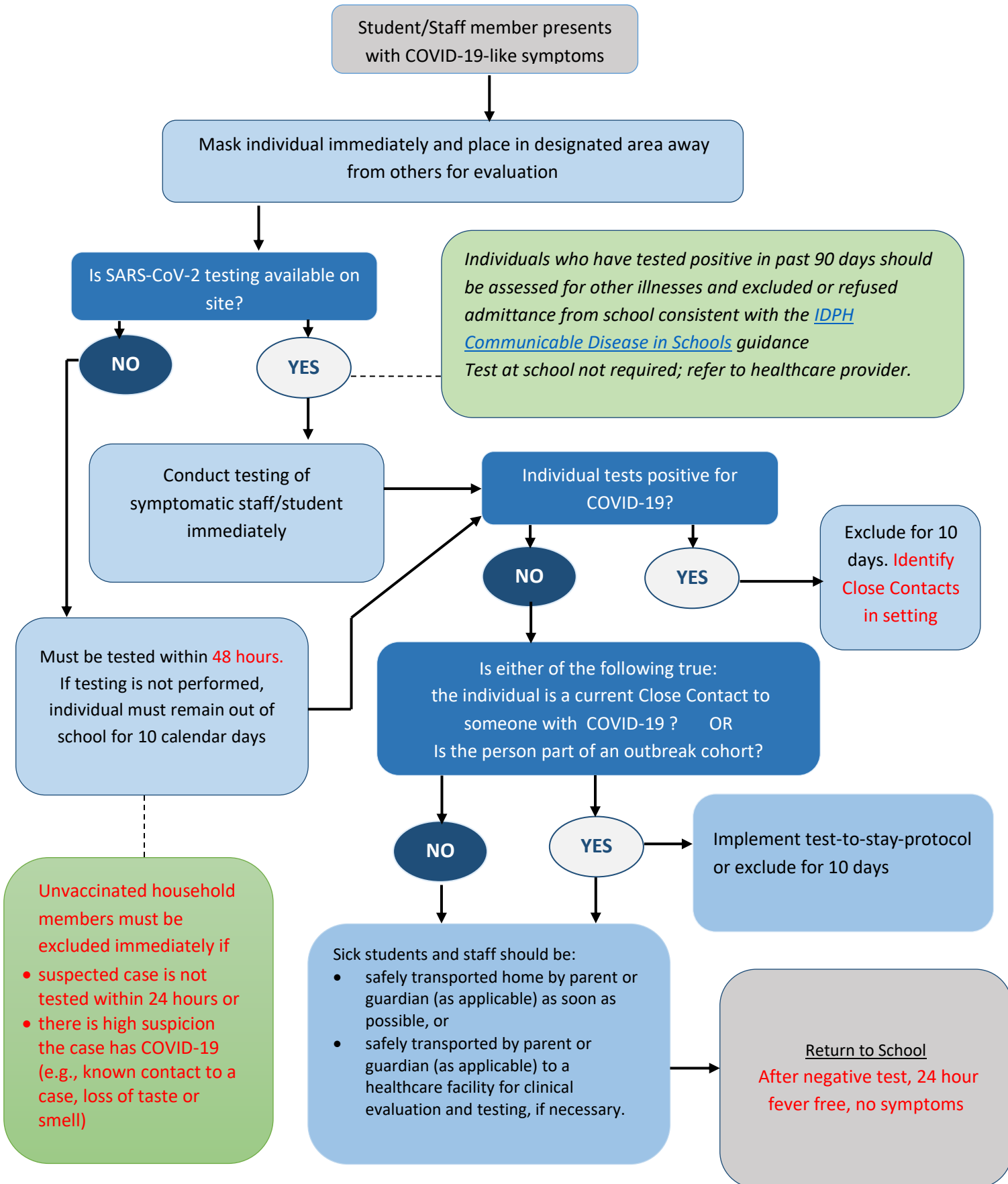
Exclude case for 10 days.  
*(May return on calendar day 11 after symptom onset or positive test collection date (if asymptomatic) and if fever free for 24 hours and symptoms improved.)*



**Situation #2 - Students, Teachers, and Support Staff Exhibiting COVID-19-like Symptoms at School**

**School Response**

9/20/2021



Student/Staff member presents with COVID-19-like symptoms

Mask individual immediately and place in designated area away from others for evaluation

Is SARS-CoV-2 testing available on site?

NO

YES

Conduct testing of symptomatic staff/student immediately

Individual tests positive for COVID-19?

NO

YES

Exclude for 10 days. Identify Close Contacts in setting

Must be tested within 48 hours. If testing is not performed, individual must remain out of school for 10 calendar days

Is either of the following true:  
the individual is a current Close Contact to someone with COVID-19? OR  
Is the person part of an outbreak cohort?

NO

YES

Implement test-to-stay-protocol or exclude for 10 days

Sick students and staff should be:

- safely transported home by parent or guardian (as applicable) as soon as possible, or
- safely transported by parent or guardian (as applicable) to a healthcare facility for clinical evaluation and testing, if necessary.

Return to School  
After negative test, 24 hour fever free, no symptoms

Unvaccinated household members must be excluded immediately if

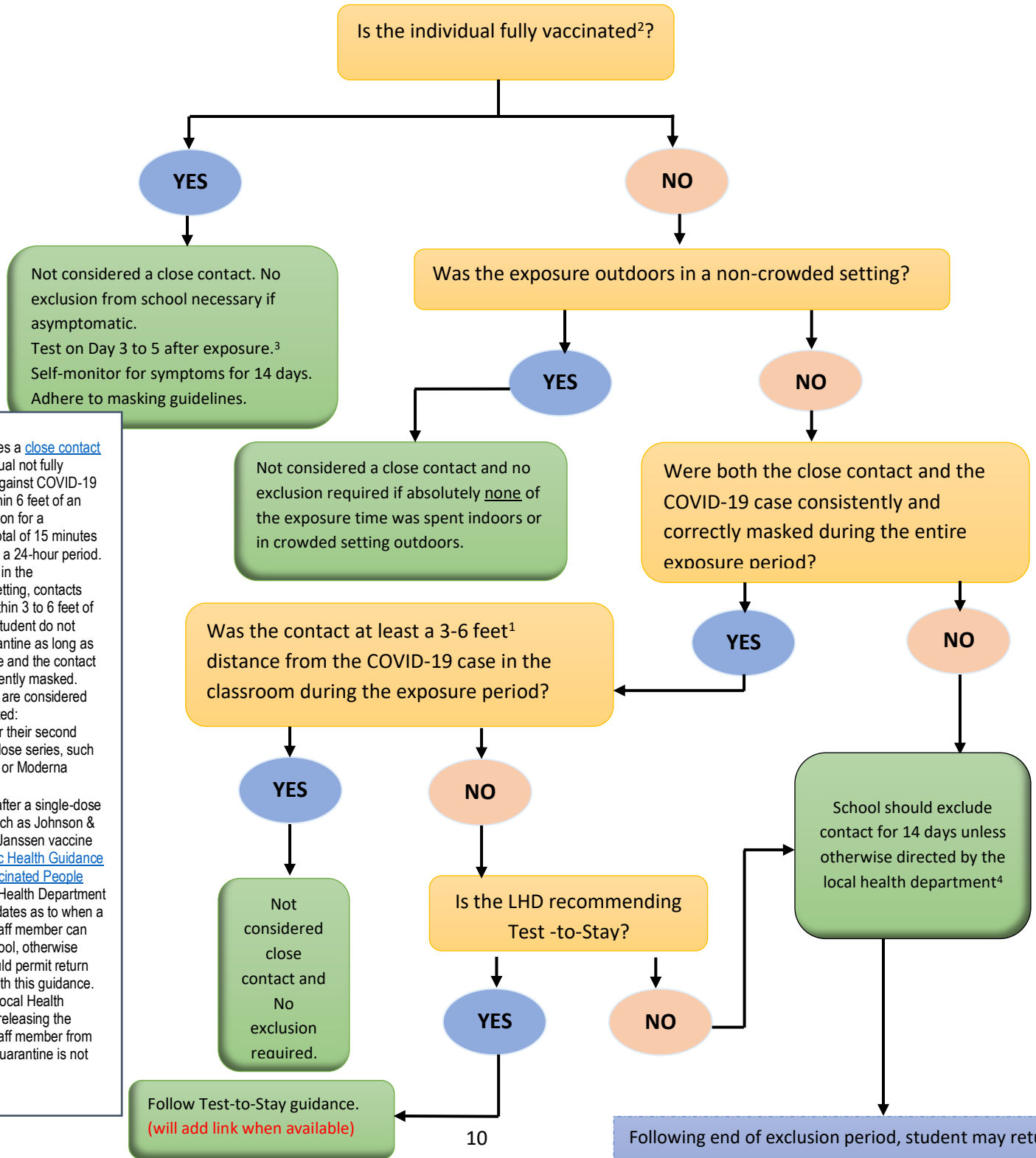
- suspected case is not tested within 24 hours or
- there is high suspicion the case has COVID-19 (e.g., known contact to a case, loss of taste or smell)

Individuals who have tested positive in past 90 days should be assessed for other illnesses and excluded or refused admittance from school consistent with the IDPH Communicable Disease in Schools guidance  
Test at school not required; refer to healthcare provider.

### Situation 3: Students or School Personnel who are Close Contacts to a Confirmed COVID-19 Case

9/20/2021

Schools should exclude or refuse to admit students and staff after close contact with a confirmed case consistent with the guidelines below, unless otherwise directed by their local health department. An isolation or quarantine order is not required for schools to exclude or refuse to admit students or staff.



**References:**

- 1 CDC defines a [close contact](#) as an individual not fully vaccinated against COVID-19 who was within 6 feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period. For students in the classroom setting, contacts who were within 3 to 6 feet of an infected student do not require quarantine as long as both the case and the contact were consistently masked.
- 2 Individuals are considered fully vaccinated:
  - 2 weeks after their second dose in a 2-dose series, such as the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines, or
  - 2 weeks after a single-dose vaccine, such as Johnson & Johnson's Janssen vaccine
- 3 [CDC Public Health Guidance for Fully Vaccinated People](#)
- 4 The Local Health Department may supply dates as to when a student or staff member can return to school, otherwise schools should permit return consistent with this guidance. Letter from Local Health Department releasing the student or staff member from isolation or quarantine is not required.

Following end of exclusion period, student may return to school. School should require social distancing in school (as much as possible) and consistent masking indoors and outdoors with no extracurricular competition for the full 14 days.