

September 22, 2020

Dear Newtown School Families,

It is hard to believe that we are already beginning our third week of hybrid learning. The new norm of wearing a mask, maintaining distance and frequent handwashing has quickly become routine for our school community. It has been heartwarming to see the high level of cooperation and teamwork across the district since the opening of schools. That mutual respect and caring is what is working to keep everyone safe and healthy as we navigate this strange school year. Your help in making this happen is truly appreciated.

Please remember that it is important for everyone to refrain from gossip and conjecture about COVID 19 cases. Misinformation spreads quickly and results in confusion and needless anxiety. Any information about student absences related to COVID 19 should be reported to the school nurse. The nurse keeps all health information confidential. It will be used for contact tracing purposes only, in cooperation with the Newtown Health Department. If at any point, your student is found to have had a direct exposure to a positive case, you will be notified by Donna Culbert, Newtown Health Director. In some situations, with parental permission, teachers may be asked to provide information about a specific scenario as part of a case investigation.

The CDC and CT Department of Health continue to stress the importance of mask wearing as a first line of defense against the spread of the virus. So, keep wearing those masks!

COVID 19 has introduced all kinds of new terminology into our everyday lives. In the hope of clearing up some misconceptions, I am sharing this list of frequently used terms and a brief definition of each:

CASE: A “case” or “positive case” refers to an individual who has tested positive for COVID 19

CONTACT: A person who has had direct contact with a positive case. (15 min or more within 6 feet of a positive case)

CONTACT OF A CONTACT: A person who has been in contact with a person who had direct contact with a positive case. (This is a low risk situation. No special treatment or restriction is needed)

ISOLATION: A person who has tested positive is asked to **strictly isolate themselves in a separate room** away from others as much as possible for 10 days from the beginning of symptoms or from the date of the positive test if no symptoms.

QUARANTINE: People who are direct contacts of a positive case need to quarantine (**do not leave the house**) for 14 days from their last exposure to a positive case. In the case that a person cannot avoid contact with the ill individual (ie a young child), quarantine begins from the last day of possible exposure which is the last day of the ill person’s isolation (for a total of 24 days)

RAPID TEST: Test for COVID with results available within hours. If positive, the result is very reliable, but there are many false negatives

PCR TEST: Gold standard for testing for COVID. Results usually within 48 hours.

CONTACT TRACING: Investigation process conducted by the Health Department. in coordination with the school district to identify and notify contacts of positive cases and to instruct them in any required quarantine or isolation procedures.

SIBLINGS: If a **student is sick** but has not been diagnosed with COVID 19, siblings usually do not need to be excluded from school. If a **student is a case**, siblings will need to quarantine for 14 days from their last exposure. If a **student is a contact**, their siblings do not need to be excluded unless they had direct contact with a positive case. (per guidelines from CT DPH)

Example:

CASE



Positive test results

ISOLATE!

CONTACTS



**Spent 15 min
within 6 feet of "case"**

QUARANTINE / TEST

CONTACTS OF A CONTACT



**Classmates of contacts
with no direct contact with case**

NO RESTRICTIONS

If you have questions about COVID 19 and its management at school, please feel free to call me. I will do my best to get answers for you.

Stay safe. Be well.

Anne Dalton, RN, BSN
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