



## COVID-19 Health Screening in TK Schools, Child Care and Extracurricular Programs Serving Children and Youth

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This document was developed by the Alameda County Public Health Department (ACPHD) in alignment [with guidance from the California Department of Public Health](#). This document will be updated as knowledge, spread of COVID-19, and availability of testing changes.

Schools and their programs **must** screen children and youth for exposure to and symptoms of COVID-19 every day before allowing them to enter the program or building. Screening is essential for limiting the spread of COVID-19 among children and school-based staff.

This document will describe:

1. The screening process, **and**
2. The criteria that must be met before a child can return to a school program after experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 or a positive test.

We recommend that programs have parents or guardians answer **Exposure** and **Symptom** questions at home. Please note the following:

- The temperature screening is optional, but it is not required.
- **Appendix A** on pg. 9 has an **Exposure** and **Symptom** question template for children.
- Schools may choose to use a variety of methods for a home health screening, which include an app, email, or an online or paper form.
- Schools do not need to monitor compliance with home screenings.

### **A. Health Screening: What to Do**

<b>The health screening has three parts:</b>
(1) Exposure Check
(2) Symptom Check & Visual Check
(3) Temperature Check (not required)

A sample of **COVID-19 health screening questions for TK schools, child care and extracurricular programs serving children and youth** is included at the end of this document.

**Please note that programs must still do a visual check when the child arrives.**



**If the answer to either question is YES, make sure the child meets the required criteria for returning to the program (see section B, page 5).**

**Before beginning the health screening, ask two important questions:**

- 1. In the past 10 days, was the child sent home sick or absent due to illness?**
- 2. In the past 10 days, was the child diagnosed with COVID-19 or did the child have a test confirming that they had the virus?**

### **1) CHILD EXPOSURE CHECK**

**The parent or guardian should answer the following questions:**

1. Within the past 14 days, has the child had close contact with anyone **in the household** who was diagnosed with COVID-19 or who had a test confirming they have the virus?
2. Within the last 14 days, has the child had **close contact with someone outside the household** who was diagnosed with COVID-19 or who had a test confirming they have the virus?

#### **Clarification for Questions One and Two Above:**

- Answer **“yes”** only if this exposure occurred within 10 days of the onset of symptoms, or within 10 days of a positive test. This is the time when the COVID positive person might have been infectious and should have been in isolation.
- **Close contact** means that the child was within **6 feet of a COVID positive person for 15 minutes or longer** (this includes multiple shorter periods in the same day that add up to 15 minutes) **EVEN IF** both the child and the other person were wearing masks. **Close contact** can also mean that the child had a briefer but major exposure to the COVID positive person’s respiratory droplets. For example, the sick person coughed directly on the child.



**If the parent or guardian answers YES to one or both questions, then ask if this exposure was more than 10 days ago?**

- **If the parent or guardian answered NO that the exposure was not more than 10 days ago, then send the child home.**
- **If the parent or guardian answered YES that the exposure was more than 10 days ago, then the child may continue to attend the program, but with the following conditions:**
  - **Note that a quarantine period of 10 days is the minimum required by the County; however, 14 days of quarantine is still the safest option. Therefore, children ending quarantine before 14 days should adhere strictly to all recommended non-pharmaceutical interventions, including always wearing face coverings, maintaining a distance of at least 6 feet from others, and monitoring for COVID-19 symptoms through Day 14.**
  - **Also note that if the child has regular close contact with anyone at high risk for severe disease, then 14 days of quarantine is required. Quarantine instructions from ACPHD can be viewed here.**

## 2) SYMPTOM CHECK + VISUAL CHECK

*Ask the parent or guardian the following question:*

Since the child was last at school (or in the last 10 days if the child has been out of school for longer than 10 days), has the child had any symptoms that are new, different, or unexplained by another reason (i.e. pre-existing diagnosis)? Including one or more of the following:

- Fever (100°F/37.8°C or higher)
- Cough
- Severe headache
- Sore throat
- Loss of taste or smell. Children may say that food “tastes bad” or “tastes funny.”
- Difficulty breathing
- Vomiting or diarrhea

**Perform a visual check:** The visual check has no specific requirements. It allows a program to send a child home if they look sick when they arrive, even if the parent says the child has no symptoms.



Look at the child for signs of:

- Illness like a cough
- Fatigue
- Extreme fussiness or irritability
- Difficulty breathing

**If the parent or guardian answers “yes” to any of the above symptoms or the child looks sick, send them home.**

### 3) TEMPERATURE CHECK

**ACPHD does not require a temperature check, but if your program wishes to check temperatures, please follow the instructions below.**

When checking for fever with a “non-touch” thermometer, Alameda County defines a fever as a temperature of **100°F (37.8°C) or higher.**

If your program requires a temperature screen and the parent did not check and report the child’s temperature before the child arrives, then the program should take the child’s temperature with a “non-touch” thermometer. The screener should wear a mask and **EITHER** wear a face shield **OR** keep their face behind a plexiglass partition. Temperatures that are below 96°F (35.6°C) should be rechecked to ensure the reading is accurate.

**If the child has a fever as defined above, send them home.**

#### **For Touch-Method Thermometers**

If a thermometer requiring a touch-method (e.g. under the tongue or on the forehead) is the only type available, then it should only be used when a fever is suspected. These thermometers must be properly cleaned and disinfected after each use. The screener **should**:

1. Wear a new pair of disposable latex-free gloves for each temperature check with a touch thermometer.
2. Perform hand hygiene before putting on **AND** after removing and disposing of the gloves.

For more detailed guidance on safely checking temperatures, refer to [COVID-19 Screening Guidance for Businesses and Organizations](#)



## B. Requirements for Returning to a School Program

*For children who were excluded because of symptoms:*

Scenario	Requirement
<p>1. If (1) the child’s <b>COVID-19 test is positive</b> OR (2) the child is <b>NOT</b> tested and has <b>NO</b> medical evaluation the child may return after:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared, <b>AND</b></li> <li>• There have been at least 24 hours with no fever, without the aid of taking medicines to lower the fever, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin), <b>AND</b></li> <li>• Other symptoms, such as cough or shortness of breath, are improving.</li> <li>• Please note: <b>A note from a doctor or clinic is not needed.</b> For more information view ACPHD’s <a href="#">How Long Should I Stay in Quarantine FAQ</a> and <a href="#">When Can I Leave Isolation Infographic</a>.</li> </ul>
<p>2. If a child is <b>NOT</b> tested but has a medical evaluation, they may return before 10 days have passed if:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Symptoms have resolved, <b>AND</b></li> <li>• A medical evaluator (a doctor, a nurse practitioner, or a certified physician assistant) provides a letter indicating that (1) an alternative diagnosis has been made and (2) the child’s symptoms are <b>NOT</b> due to COVID-19. For privacy reasons, the program is not allowed to require disclosure of the alternative diagnosis.</li> </ul> <p><b>Please note:</b> Sometimes a child’s symptoms are clearly due to another cause, such as strep throat or hand-foot-and-mouth disease. In this situation, the provider may clear a child to return to the school program. This <b>does not</b></p>



	<p><b>mean</b> the child does not have COVID-19. Many children and youth with COVID-19 do not have any symptoms. An alternative diagnosis only means that a cause other than COVID-19 was found for symptoms that kept the child from attending the program.</p>
<p>3. If the child’s <b>COVID-19 test is negative</b>, and the parents or guardians want the child to return to the program before the 10 days of isolation have passed, the child may return if:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The child is feeling better (symptoms do not have to be completely resolved), <b>AND</b></li> <li>• There have been at least 24 hours with no fever, without the aid of taking medicines to lower a fever, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin), <b>AND</b></li> <li>• The child consults a medical evaluator (a doctor, a nurse practitioner, or a certified physician assistant) to determine the significance of their symptoms. The medical evaluator will need to provide a letter indicating that (1) the child’s symptoms are <b>NOT</b> due to COVID- 19, <b>AND</b> (2) the COVID-19 test was negative (the program is <u>not allowed</u> to require disclosure of the alternative diagnosis), <b>BUT</b></li> <li>• If it is not possible for the parent or guardian to consult a medical evaluator, <b>they must obtain a COVID-19 negative test result indicating that a molecular test or a PCR was performed.</b></li> </ul>
<p>4. <b>For children without symptoms, who were</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the child was excluded from a program <b>due to close contact with or</b></li> </ul>



<p><b>excluded because of exposure to an actual or possible COVID-19 case:</b></p>	<p><b>household exposure to a COVID positive person or to a person with symptoms of COVID</b>, the child may return after at least 10 days of quarantine following the last household contact or close contact with that person as long as the child does not develop symptoms. If the child develops symptoms of COVID-19 during quarantine, a COVID-19 test should be obtained.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Note that though a quarantine period of 10 days is the minimum required, 14 days of quarantine is still the safest option. Furthermore, all individuals ending quarantine before Day 14 should adhere strictly to all recommended non-pharmaceutical interventions, including wearing face coverings at all times, maintaining a distance of at least 6 feet from others, and self-monitor for COVID-19 symptoms through Day 14.</li><li>• Also note that if the child has regular close contact with anyone at <u>high risk for severe disease</u>, then 14 days of quarantine is required. For more information view ACPHD’s <a href="#">How Long Should I Stay in Quarantine FAQ</a> and <a href="#">When Can I Leave Isolation Infographic</a>.</li></ul>
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**What to do when a child must be sent home**

1. Tell the parent or guardian that the child cannot attend the program that day.
2. Instruct them to contact their regular doctor or clinic and to consider a COVID-19



test if appropriate.

3. Give the parent or guardian the parent handout on COVID-19 health screening. The parent handout lists the criteria required for the child to return to the program and has instructions on how to get tested.
4. Remind the parent that the child should stay at home until they meet the criteria to return to the program.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What if a parent is unsure whether to answer “Yes” to the symptom question?**

Ask the parent to focus on whether the symptom is **NEW** and/or **DIFFERENT** from the child’s usual illness, or if the symptoms are **UNEXPLAINED**. Encourage the parent to trust their intuition. Here is an example:

The child has asthma. They often cough from exercise or allergies.

- Is the child’s cough worse than usual or sound unlike it usually does? **NO**, then this is not a new or different symptom.
- Is the child’s cough worse than usual or sound unlike it usually does? **YES**, then this cough **is** a new or different symptom.

### **What if a parent says they CANNOT get a test for the child?**

Ask families if they have tried the options below:

- Families who have a health care provider, or have an insurance plan or health coverage, should contact their provider or health plan about testing.
- For questions about testing and to see a list of known COVID-19 testing locations in Alameda County [visit our Testing For COVID-19 website](#).



## Appendix A: Sample Questions for Children

Sample Questions	YES	NO
(1) In the past 10 days, was the child sent home sick or absent due to illness?		
(2) In the past 10 days, was the child diagnosed with COVID-19 or did the child have a test confirming that they had the virus?		
<b>If the answer to either question is YES, make sure the child meets the required criteria for returning to the program.</b>		
(3) Within the past 14 days, has the child had <b>close contact</b> with anyone <b>in the household</b> who was diagnosed with COVID-19 or who had a test confirming they have the virus?		
(4) Within the last 14 days, has the child had <b>close contact with someone outside the household</b> who was diagnosed with COVID-19 or who had a test confirming they have the virus?		
<p><b><i>IF YES to Question 3 or 4 → Child CANNOT attend the program</i></b>  <b><i>IF NO to Questions 3 &amp; 4 → Answer Below Questions</i></b></p>		
<b>Does the Child have any of the following:</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
(5) Fever (100°F/37.8°C or higher)		
(6) Cough		
(7) Severe headache		
(8) Sore throat		
(9) Loss of taste or smell. Children may say food “tastes bad” or “smells funny”		
(10) Difficulty breathing		
(11) Vomiting or diarrhea		
<p><b><i>IF YES to ANY of the above questions → Child CANNOT attend the program</i></b>  <b><i>IF NO to ALL above questions → Take the Child’s TEMPERATURE (If your program requires temperature check)</i></b></p>		
<b>Take the Child’s Temperature</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
(17) Is the Child’s Temperature 100.0°F (37.8°C) or higher?		
<p><b><i>IF YES, Temperature is 100.0°F or higher → Child CANNOT attend the program</i></b>  <b><i>IF NO, Temperature is not 100.0°F or higher → Child CAN attend</i></b></p>		