



COVID-19 Health Screening in TK-12 Schools and Extracurricular Programs Serving School-Age Children and Youth

September 16, 2020

This document was developed by the Alameda County Public Health Department (ACPHD) in alignment with [guidance](#) from the California Department of Public Health. The 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 each day before allowing them to enter the program. The purpose of screening is to limit the spread of COVID-19 among students and program staff. This document 1) describes the screening process and 2) sets out the conditions that must be met before a student can return to a program after symptoms of COVID-19 (or a positive test).

A. Health Screening: What to Ask

*The health screening has three parts: 1) asking about possible exposure to someone with COVID-19; 2) asking about symptoms and seeing if the student looks ill; and 3) checking temperature. A sample *COVID-19 Health Screening Sheet for TK-12 Schools and Extracurricular Programs Serving School-Age Children and Youth* is included at the end of this document.*

Programs may have parents or guardians answer the exposure and symptom questions, and take a student's temperature, at home. The information must be sent to the program before the student arrives on the day the student is attending, by e-mail, app, online form, or other form of communication. *Programs should still do a visual check when the student arrives.*

If the student was previously absent due to illness or was sent home sick, ask them if they meet the required conditions to return to the program before starting the screening.

1) EXPOSURE CHECK

Ask the parent or guardian the following:

- Within the last 10 days, has the student been diagnosed with COVID-19 or had a test confirming they have the virus?



- Does the student *live in the same household* with someone who, within the last 14 days, has been in isolation for COVID-19 or had a test confirming they have the virus?
- Does the student live *in the same household* with someone who has had any of the symptoms of COVID-19 listed below within the past 14 days?
- Has the student had *close contact with someone outside the household* who has been in isolation for COVID-19 or had a test confirming they have the virus within the last 14 days? Close contact means that the student was within 6 feet of a COVID+ person for 15 minutes or longer (including multiple shorter periods in the same day that add up to 15 minutes) EVEN IF both the student and the other person were wearing masks. Close contact can also mean that the student had a major exposure to the COVID+ person's respiratory droplets – for example, the sick person coughed directly on the student.

If the parent answers yes to one or more of these questions, send the student home.

2) SYMPTOM CHECK + VISUAL CHECK

Ask the parent or guardian the following:

In the last 24 hours, has the student had any of these symptoms, new or different from what they usually have or not explained by another reason (i.e. pre-existing diagnosis)?

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Seems sick or like they are starting to get sick



Perform a visual check: The visual check has no specific requirements. It allows a program to send a student home if they look ill when they arrive, even if the parent says the student has no symptoms. Look at the student for signs of illness like cough, fatigue, extreme fussiness or irritability, or difficulty breathing.

If the parent or guardian answers “yes” to any symptom or the student looks ill, send them home. If the student has one or more siblings in the program, they also need to be sent home.

3) TEMPERATURE CHECK

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 the parent did not check and report a temperature before the student arrives, the program should measure their temperature with a “non-touch” thermometer. The screener should wear a mask and should EITHER wear a face shield OR keep their face behind a plexiglass partition. Temperatures below 96°F (35.6°C) should be rechecked to ensure the reading is accurate.

If the student has a fever, as defined above, send them home. If the student has one or more siblings in the program, they also need to be sent home.

Note: If a thermometer requiring a touch-method (e.g. under the tongue or on the forehead) is the only type available, 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 gloves for each temperature check with a touch thermometer; and 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 to Return to a School Program

For students who were excluded because of symptoms:

- If 1) the student's **COVID-19 test is positive** OR 2) the student is NOT tested and has NO medical evaluation the student may return after:
 - At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared, AND
 - There has been at least 24 hours with no fever, without taking medicines to lower a fever, like acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin), AND
 - Other symptoms, such as cough or shortness of breath, are improving.

A note from a doctor or clinic is not needed. Please see the ACPHD Isolation and Quarantine [FAQ](#) and [infographic](#) for more information.

- If a student is NOT tested but has a medical evaluation, they can return before 10 days have passed if:
 - Symptoms have resolved, AND
 - A medical evaluator (generally 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 symptoms are NOT due to COVID-19. For privacy reasons, the program is not allowed to require disclosure of the alternative diagnosis.

Note: Sometimes a student'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 student to return to a school program. This does not mean that the student does not have COVID-19. Many children and youth with COVID-19 do not have any symptoms. It only means that a cause other than COVID-19 was found for the symptoms that kept the student out of the program.

- If the student's **COVID-19 test is negative**, and the parents or guardians want the student to return to the program before 10 days have passed, they can return if:
 - The student is feeling better (symptoms do not have to be completely resolved), AND
 - There have been at least 24 hours with no fever, without taking medicines to lower a fever, like acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin), AND



- A medical evaluator (generally a doctor, a nurse practitioner, or a certified physician assistant) provides a letter indicating that 1) the symptoms are NOT due to COVID-19, AND 2) the COVID-19 test was negative. Due to varying sensitivities of available tests, the letter is needed to verify the reliability of the COVID-19 test and to ensure that the symptoms have an explanation other than COVID-19. For privacy reasons, the program is not allowed to require disclosure of the alternative diagnosis.

For students without symptoms, who were excluded because of exposure to an actual or possible COVID-19 case:

- If the student was excluded from a program **due to close contact with or household exposure to a COVID+ person or to a person with symptoms of COVID**, the student can return 14 days after the last household contact or close contact with that person. For more information, please see the ACPHD Isolation and Quarantine [FAQ](#) and [infographic](#).

What to do when a student must be sent home:

- Tell the parent or guardian that the student cannot attend the program that day.
- Instruct them to contact their regular doctor or clinic and consider a test for COVID-19 if appropriate.
- Give them the parent handout on COVID-19 health screens. The parent handout lists the conditions required for the student to return to the program and has instructions on how to get tested.
- Remind the parent that the student should stay at home until they meet the conditions 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, DIFFERENT from the student’s usual illness, or UNEXPLAINED. Encourage the parent to trust their intuition. Here is an example.

- The student has asthma. They often cough with exercise or allergies.
 - They have their usual cough NO, this is not new or different.
 - Their cough is worse than usual or sounds different than usual YES

What if a parent says they can’t get a test for the student?

Ask families if they have tried the two options below:

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



Before starting

- **Check whether the student was absent or sent home because they were sick.** If they were, make sure they meet the conditions required to return to the program before you start the COVID-19 health screen.

Step 1: Ask about exposure

EXPOSURE	YES	NO
Within the last 10 days, has the student been diagnosed with COVID-19 or had a test confirming they have the virus?		
Does the student <i>live in the same household</i> with someone who has been in isolation for COVID-19 or had a test confirming they have the virus?		
Does the student <i>live in the same household</i> with someone who has had any of the symptoms of COVID-19 listed above within the past 14 days?		
Has the student had <i>close contact with someone outside the household</i> who has been in isolation for COVID-19 or had a test confirming they have the virus within the last 14 days? Close contact means that the student was within 6 feet of a COVID+ person for 15 minutes or longer (including multiple shorter periods that add up to 15 minutes) EVEN IF both the student and the other person were wearing masks. Close contact can also mean that the student had a major exposure to the COVID+ person’s respiratory droplets – for example, the sick person coughed directly on the student.		

IF YES to any exposure → SEND HOME (see instructions below)

IF NO to all exposures → GO TO STEP 2.



Step 2: Ask about and look for symptoms

- **Ask the parent or guardian**, “In the last 24 hours, has the student had any of these symptoms that are new or different from what they usually have, and not explained by another reason?”

SYMPTOM	YES	NO
Fever or chills		
Cough		
Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing		
Fatigue		
Muscle or body aches		
Headache		
New loss of taste or smell		
Sore throat		
Congestion or runny nose		
Nausea or vomiting		
Diarrhea		
Look at the student. Do they look ill? Look for signs of illness like cough, fatigue, extreme fussiness or irritability, or difficulty breathing.	YES	NO
Student looks ill		

IF YES to any symptom or student looks ill → SEND HOME (see instructions below)

IF NO to all symptoms and student looks well → GO TO STEP 3.



Step 3: Take the temperature

- Ask the student to come forward. Take their temperature. *It is important to wear a mask as well as EITHER wear a face shield OR keep your face behind a plexiglass partition.*

Temperature 100.0°F (37.8°C) or higher	YES/NO
--	--------

IF YES, temperature is 100.0°F or higher SEND HOME (see instructions below).

IF NO, Say, “Thank you, the student can come in now.” Tell the student, “Please wash your hands now.”

Send home

- Say, “I am sorry, the student cannot come today; they may be sick. Please call the student’s doctor or clinic and consider asking for a COVID-19 test. Here is information on when the student can come back to our program, and where they can get tested.”
- Give the parent a copy of “*For Parents and Guardians: COVID-19 Health Screening in TK-12 Schools and Extracurricular Programs Serving School-Age Children and Youth.*”
- Document that the student was sent home because of exposure, symptoms, or fever.