



**Illinois  
State Board of  
Education**

## **IDPH & ISBE Joint Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in Schools** **March 22, 2022**

The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) and Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) are issuing new guidance, fully adopting the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) updated [Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools](#). This new guidance supersedes all prior COVID-19 school guidance documents and applies to all public and nonpublic schools that serve students in pre-kindergarten through grade 12 (pre-K-12).

[Executive Order 2022-06](#), issued on February 28, 2022, rescinded Sections 1(a) and 2(a) of Executive Order 2021-18 and Section 1 of Executive Order 2021-22, thereby ending universal indoor masking requirements, including in schools and in public indoor settings. As always, schools, school districts, municipalities and other settings may choose to require individuals to wear masks based on the [COVID-19 community level](#) or other factors. [Executive Order 2022-07](#), issued on March 4, 2022, lifted the school exclusion requirements, shifting schools back to the ordinary processes for handling infectious diseases.

Schools and local health departments should return to exercising their longstanding authority, including as described in the [Communicable Disease Code](#) and according to schools' infectious disease policies, to address infectious disease cases among students and staff. IDPH and ISBE strongly encourage schools to follow the CDC's guidance and the recommendations of their local health department on [quarantine and isolation](#) for confirmed and probable cases and close contacts. Individuals under isolation or quarantine should, and schools and local health departments may require individuals to, stay home for 10 days with the option to return after 5 days with masking through day 10, if asymptomatic or afebrile with symptoms improving for those with COVID-19. Schools must continue to provide [remote learning](#) to any student who is under isolation or quarantine based on the State Superintendent's Remote Learning Declaration.

Vaccination is currently the leading public health prevention strategy to prevent adverse outcomes related to COVID-19. People who are [up to date with COVID-19 vaccines](#) are at low risk of symptomatic or severe infection, hospitalization, and death. To promote vaccination in school communities, Section 3 of [Executive Order 2021-22](#) was reissued and remains in effect. Accordingly, school personnel must establish they are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 or submit to at least weekly testing for COVID-19.

On February 25, 2022, the CDC released a [new framework](#) to monitor the level of COVID-19 in communities that includes hospitalizations, hospital capacity, and cases. This new approach focuses recommendations on minimizing severe disease, limiting strain on the healthcare system, and enabling those at highest risk to protect themselves against infection and severe disease. Rather than focusing on eliminating all virus transmission, the CDC recommends



prevention measures, such as masks, when the level of severe disease in communities has the potential to overwhelm the healthcare system. These prevention measures can reduce that strain and avoid crisis.

Community levels can help schools and local health departments, as well as individuals, make decisions based on their local context and their unique needs. When communities are at a “high” level, the CDC recommends universal indoor masking as masks are critical to keeping classrooms open for in-person learning. In all communities, staff and students with COVID-19-like symptoms, a positive test, or exposure to someone with COVID-19 should wear a mask around others. Masks continue to be federally required in healthcare settings and for healthcare personnel, including school nurse offices.

The following additional COVID-19 prevention strategies outlined in the CDC guidance remain important to protect students and community members, especially those who are not up to date on COVID-19 vaccination and in areas where the [COVID-19 community level](#) is medium or high, and to allow schools to safely deliver in-person instruction. Schools should implement these layered prevention strategies to the greatest extent possible and taking into consideration factors such as the COVID-19 community level, vaccination coverage, screening testing, and occurrence of outbreaks, consistent with the CDC guidance.

- Physical distancing
- Screening testing to promptly identify cases, clusters, and outbreaks
- Ventilation
- Handwashing and respiratory etiquette
- Staying home when sick and getting tested
- Contact tracing in combination with quarantine and refusal to admit
- Cleaning and disinfection

IDPH and ISBE continue to maintain additional guidance documents addressing Illinois-specific guidance for the following

- [School Guidance FAQ](#)
- [Public Health Interim Guidance for Local Health Departments and PreK-12 for Addressing COVID-19 Cases, Contact and Outbreaks](#)
- [COVID-19 Interim Guidance For Schools Decision Tree for Evaluating Symptomatic Individuals from Pre-K-12 Schools](#)
- [Interim Guidance on Testing for COVID-19 in Community Settings and Schools](#)