



MEMORANDUM

TO: Sam Percy

Deputy Commissioner of Operations, Tennessee Department of Education

FROM: Morgan McDonald, MD, FACP, FAAP

Deputy Commissioner for Population Health, Tennessee Department of Health

Morgan McDonald

DATE: August 11, 2020

SUBJECT: Requested Clarification of Recommendations for Schools Regarding Management of COVID-19

TDH [guidance](#) states:

- Any student or staff who has symptoms consistent with COVID-19 or who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 must isolate at home for a period of 10 days from the onset of their symptoms (or the date they were tested, if asymptomatic) AND must be fever-free (without the use of fever-reducing medications) AND have improvement in symptoms for at least 24 hours. This is not optional.
- Any student or staff who has been a close contact (within 6 feet for >10 minutes) of a person with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 must quarantine at home for a period of 14 days from their last exposure to that individual. This is not optional.

Ten minutes of exposure refers to 10 consecutive minutes in our general guidance above. Due to the lack of data to precisely define the duration of time that constitutes a prolonged exposure, TDH has continued to use the original close contact definition used by CDC. Per [CDC](#) "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." Incremental exposure does increase the risk of transmission, and TDH staff must understand the full context of potential exposure in order to issue the most appropriate quarantine recommendations specific to each case. This speaks to the importance of health department immediate notification of cases and full participation by all parties to assure that circumstances are fully understood. There may certainly be indications for quarantine if the consecutive time was smaller but the exposure was more intense or the cumulative time was substantial enough to warrant quarantine recommendations.

Furthermore, CDC and TDH recommend 14 day quarantine for close contacts whether or not a mask is used. Per [CDC](#) "The determination of close contact should be made irrespective of whether the person with COVID-19 or the contact was wearing a mask. Because the general public has not received training on proper selection and use of respiratory PPE, it cannot be certain whether respiratory PPE worn during contact with an individual with COVID-19 infection protected them from exposure. Therefore, as a conservative approach, the determination of close contact should generally be made irrespective of whether the contact was wearing respiratory PPE, which is recommended for health care personnel and other trained users, or a mask recommended for the general public."



We recognize that this guidance is frequently changing as the nation's experts learn more about this disease. TDH is in constant communication with CDC and other national experts and will continuously evaluate its recommendations based on best available information and evidence. We appreciate your ongoing commitment to the safety of students and staff alike, and we remain available for ongoing dialogue and consultation at all times.