



Alamance-Burlington
Schools

COMMUNICATIONS GUIDANCE

FOR COVID-19



www.abss.k12.nc.us



IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

In collaboration with the Alamance County Health Department, regarding the presence of COVID-19 in our community, ABSS is providing this information about our communication and safety protocols.

i Parents, to make sure you receive critical notifications confirm your contact information is correct in PowerSchool. Call your student's school if you have questions or need to make updates.

!! In a child care or school setting, a **COVID-19 cluster** is defined as a minimum of five laboratory-confirmed cases with illness onsets or initial positive results within a 14-day period and cases are related.

i Individuals who test positive are required to remain in isolation, the amount of time is determined by the health department.

!! Students or staff members verified as close contacts of individuals who tested positive are required to quarantine for a minimum of 14 days from last exposure and recommended to be tested.

i Each situation has its own set of circumstances and the district will continue to work with the health department to think through each event.

!! At any time, ABSS may move a group of students, class, or grade level to remote instruction, or relocate the class to another room, out of caution.

i Families, students, and staff are encouraged to reach out to your school nurse for any questions regarding COVID-19.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION



COVID-19 Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. People with these symptoms may have COVID-19:

- 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

What counts as **close contact**?

- You were within 6 feet of someone who has COVID-19 for at least 15 minutes
- You provided care at home to someone who is sick with COVID-19

As part of the district's response, contact tracing will occur. If there are "close contacts" at a school, they will be personally notified and instructed to quarantine for a minimum of 14 days from last day of exposure and self-monitor. In all instances, health officials will be notified. *NOTE: ABSS will not be releasing details about a specific response at a school (areas being cleaned, if there were "close contacts" and if so how many, etc.) which could potentially lead to the identification of an individual that has COVID-19 who was recently on that campus.*

Quarantine is used to *keep someone who might have been exposed to COVID-19 away from others.* Quarantine helps prevent spread of disease that can occur before a person knows they are sick or if they are infected with the virus without feeling symptoms. People in quarantine should stay home, separate themselves from others, monitor their health, and follow directions from the health department. ABSS requires that all school aged household members will also need to stay home and should participate in remote learning. *Quarantine differs from isolation:*

- **Quarantine** keeps someone who might have been exposed to the virus away from others.
- **Isolation** separates people who are infected with the virus away from people who are not infected.

Cluster is a minimum of five cases with illness onsets or initial positive results within a 14 day period AND plausible epidemiological linkage between cases.



POSSIBLE REASONS FOR SOMEONE TO QUARANTINE



Individuals may quarantine to monitor their health to ensure they are not at risk of infecting others.



Individuals may quarantine because they are caring for someone who is vulnerable.



Individuals may quarantine because they are someone who is vulnerable.



Individuals may quarantine because a member of their household has been named as a close contact to a COVID-19 positive.



Individuals may quarantine because they are following directions from their state or local health department.



An individual's privacy is protected by law. **FERPA** and **HIPAA** prevent a district or school from sharing a person's medical information or status.



[Review the NCDHHS reference guide.](#)

[Review the CDC COVID-19 guidance.](#)

IMPORTANT DEFINITIONS



HIPAA

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) is a federal law that required the creation of national standards to protect sensitive patient health information from being disclosed without the patient's consent or knowledge. The US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) issued the HIPAA Privacy Rule to implement the requirements of HIPAA. The HIPAA Security Rule protects a subset of information covered by the Privacy Rule.

HIPAA Privacy Rule

The Privacy Rule standards address the use and disclosure of individuals' health information (known as "protected health information") by entities subject to the Privacy Rule. These individuals and organizations are called "covered entities." The Privacy Rule also contains standards for individuals' rights to understand and control how their health information is used. A major goal of the Privacy Rule is to ensure that individuals' health information is properly protected while allowing the flow of health information needed to provide and promote high quality health care and to protect the public's health and well-being. The Privacy Rule strikes a balance that permits important uses of information while protecting the privacy of people who seek care and healing.

FERPA

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a Federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. The law applies to all schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education.

These federal laws protect the privacy of our employees and students.



WHAT IF A STUDENT GETS SICK AT SCHOOL?



SCENARIO FLOW CHART



Student feels unwell in classroom



Nurse is notified, takes student's temperature and discusses symptoms



Student has 100.4 or greater temperature and/or chills; shortness of breath or difficulty breathing; new cough; new loss of taste or smell.



Nurse isolates student until parent can pick up student



Parent has the student tested



TEST IS NEGATIVE

Student can return to school once there is no fever (100.4 or greater) without the use of fever-reducing medication and they have felt well for 24 hours

TEST IS POSITIVE

Student should remain out of school until 10 days since first symptoms, it has been 24 hours since a fever without use of fever-reducing medication, and there is symptom improvement (including cough/shortness of breath).

The ABSS notification protocol will be followed once a school is notified of a student, staff member, or visitor that tests positive for COVID-19.

WHAT IF A FAMILY MEMBER GETS SICK?



SCENARIO FLOW CHART



Student has someone at home who tests positive for COVID-19



Student must quarantine at home for 14 days after the last day of exposure



Parent has the student(s) tested immediately if the student(s) is ill or about 6 days after last exposure to COVID-19 if well.



Should one member of the household have a positive test OR be named a close contact to a positive case, children must be quarantined. The amount of time is determined by our health department.

The ABSS notification protocol will be followed once a school is notified of a student, staff member, or visitor that tests positive for COVID-19.



WHAT IF A STAFF MEMBER GETS SICK?



SCENARIO FLOW CHART



Staff member tests positive for COVID-19 and contacts school administration



School administration directs staff member to the School Nurse



School Nurse interviews staff member and begins contact tracing with the Lead Nurse



Lead Nurse shares close contacts with the health department who alert any person/family who needs to self-isolate due to being a close contact

The ABSS notification protocol will be followed once a school is notified of a student, staff member, or visitor that tests positive for COVID-19.

NOTIFICATION PROTOCOL



This notification protocol will be followed once a school is notified of a student, staff member, or visitor that tests positive for COVID-19.

Alamance-Burlington Schools follows communications guidance from the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services and in collaboration with the Alamance County Health Department.



Families of students identified as close contacts will be notified directly through a letter or a phone call with directions on how to proceed, based on ABSS/ACHD determined risk of exposure. Close contact staff members will be personally notified by school nurse or administration.



In the event of a cluster, families and staff members at the individual school will be generally notified by phone about the cluster.



Weekly district data, including the number of new positive, school-affected cases, will be published online each Friday at www.abss.k12.nc.us



We understand the importance of clear, consistent information. Our families can count on us to keep them informed through our website, ConnectED messaging, and social media.

Follow us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter
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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What are the basic expectations for students, parents, staff and visitors who come on to a school campus?

Upon arrival to a school, everyone has to take part in Health Screenings, which includes a temperature check and answering 3 attestation questions specific to COVID-19. All K-12 students, staff and visitors are required to wear masks on campuses and school buses. Everyone is also being required to maintain 6 feet social distancing and adhere to any signage specific to walkways, entrances or exits.

Will the district begin sending out "COVID-19 Alerts" via its ConnectED and social media?

While the district will not release confidential student or staff information, "close contacts" (individuals within 6 feet for more than 15 minutes) who may have been potentially exposed to a person with COVID-19 will be directly notified. We will send out notifications for clusters of five or more cases.

Why doesn't ABSS provide more specifics in its alerts, like whether it was a student, parent, staff member or visitor who has COVID-19?

While COVID-19 is on the minds of everyone, a person's individual medical information is their own. While it is true that reporting this information wouldn't necessarily identify someone who has COVID-19 to the general public, our schools have gotten smaller in Plan B/C and Virtual, meaning there are fewer people coming onto our campuses. ABSS will not release any details in its alerts which, through the process of elimination, may lead to the identification of an "individual" that has COVID-19. ABSS will also make every effort to prevent creating an environment where upon return from quarantine a student or staff member may experience shame or some other negative feeling simply because they had gotten sick or diagnosed with COVID-19. Per NCDHHS guidance we will share information related to clusters at school locations.

Will an alert be sent if someone who was at a school had to quarantine because they learned they are a "close contact"?

Being a "close contact" and having COVID-19 are not the same thing. As such, ABSS will not send an alert simply because an individual at a school was named a "close contact" and asked to quarantine and self-monitor.

Will ABSS release alerts for remote/virtual students or staff approved for teleworking who test positive for COVID-19?

No. Our alerts serve as a public health awareness tool for all of the students, staff, parents and visitors who are physically coming on to our campuses. As there is community spread of COVID-19, it is a fact that there are going to be some ABSS students, staff and family members not coming on to our campuses who test positive for COVID-19.

If I am at a school where an alert goes out. Does this mean I was exposed to someone with COVID-19?

As a part of the district's response, any "close contacts" who were potentially exposed will be personally contacted and told to quarantine for 14 days and self-monitor. This means if you were at a school where an individual that tested positive was on the campus and you were not directly notified, then you are not considered a "close contact".