

## COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions for Staff

### **What happens if I test positive for COVID-19?**

If you test positive for COVID-19 through community testing, do not report to work. You might be asked to quarantine in your home or at a government facility. You can inform your principal or immediate supervisor and request to:

1. Work remotely
2. Avail of administrative leave

Your principal/immediate supervisor will inform you of the required documentation for your request.

If you avail of community testing or school based testing and you are awaiting results, you may continue to work unless you are presenting symptoms or have been instructed by the task force to self-isolate until your results are available.

1. If you test negative, you will receive an email or be contacted by the task force and you may report to work.
2. If a positive result is detected, the Contact Tracing Team will communicate with you to provide further guidance for you and your family.
3. You may inform your Principal/Program Director/Designee but you are not obligated to share results of your testing.
4. Your Principal/Program Director/Designee will inform PSS COE and/ or designated ACOE of reported cases identified while maintaining the privacy (names) of individuals.

If you are required to quarantine, you may return to work/school after the COVID-19 Task Force has cleared you from quarantine.

If you are on Rota or Tinian, the COVID-19 Task Force will communicate with your Health Center to arrange for quarantine or possible transfer to Saipan for monitoring/treatment.

### **What do I do if a student in my class/school or a colleague tests positive?**

If you do not hear from the COVID-19 Task Force, then there is no requirement for you to self-isolate. The COVID-19 Contact Tracing Team will identify all close contacts (PUIs), and follow them up directly. If you become identified as a close contact, the contact tracers will provide guidance on next steps. However, if you haven't been identified and you start to develop symptoms, do not report to work, monitor your symptoms, and contact your primary care provider to find out if you should be tested.

It is important to remember that the confirmed case will be isolated and no longer within the school therefore the risk of transmission from that person has been removed from the school setting.

In each identified case, the Commissioner of Education or designee will consult with CHCC and the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force to determine whether and how schools will be opened. This decision will be based on the degree of contact tracing needed, resources available, and updated protocols/directives.

### **What is a 'close contact' or Person Under Investigation (PUI)?**

Within a school or other structured or supervised setting, an individual would only be identified as a contact if they have had prolonged close contact with the case (someone who tests positive for COVID-19). This could mean an individual in the same household or someone who has at least 15 minutes of exposure, within 6 feet of a positive case. It does not include all individuals in the same class/office/building or all those who sit next to each other, because the risk of COVID spreading in the workplace or school setting is much lower than in a household.

### **How will the Task Force get close contact information?**

If you test positive for COVID-19 you should expect to be contacted by the COVID-19 Task Force. They will ask you to provide names and contact information regarding individuals that you may have had prolonged exposure to, this may be members of your household or close colleagues and acquaintances.

### **Will the COVID Task Force inform my workplace/school?**

No. The COVID-19 Task Force will communicate directly with you. You may choose to disclose your information to your immediate supervisor to arrange leave requests, but you do not need to share your results. Individuals are under no obligation to share their protected health information with others without their consent.

### **Are there any increased risks to school staff?**

Schools continue to be safe environments and have a wide range of mitigation measures in place designed to minimize transitions risk and which make our schools safe for children and staff.

If the case of COVID-19 was in the school during the infectious period, the school will be contacted by the Task Force. This will usually be on the same day that the Task Force is informed that the case attended schools while infectious, but may be the next day. However it is important to remember that the confirmed case is no longer in school. Anyone who has symptoms which could be consistent with COVID-19 should follow district protocols and stay home. It takes an average of 4-7 days before any other person might become unwell and infectious to others (Incubation period). This allows time for the Task Force to contact schools as appropriate.

All school staff have now had the opportunity to have two vaccines as well as boosters. The CNMI Public School System has a 90% vaccination rate for staff and teachers. Additionally, mitigation measures are in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19:

1. Required masks in all PSS buildings
2. Social distancing
3. Sanitizing and regular cleaning
4. Temperature checks
5. Screening and vaccination efforts in collaboration with CHCC

When cases are identified, school administrators and supervisors will take immediate action to ensure that the school building/classroom is safe for all who enter. These include:

- Sanitizing the space for staff and students
- Providing close contact information to the COVID-19 Task Force
- Updating the district tracking sheet and communicating with leadership
- Providing updated information to staff while maintaining the privacy of individuals
  - Confirming whether positive cases are identified without disclosing names
  - Reassuring staff that sanitizing is being conducted
  - Communicating with leadership and the Task Force regarding concerns that parents and staff may have

### **What is the contagious period?**

Individuals who recover from COVID-19 are no longer contagious after 10 days from testing positive. According to the CDC, individuals can be released from self-quarantine after 10 days from the onset of symptoms and/or a positive test.

### **What if someone is identified as a close contact but they are fully vaccinated? Do they have to self-quarantine?**

If the individual is identified by the Contact Tracing Team, they may be required to self-quarantine and be tested. If they test negative, they may be cleared to return to work/school.

Unvaccinated individuals identified by the Contact Tracing Team may be required to isolate in their homes or a government facility or to be tested. If test results are negative, they may be cleared to return to work/school.

### **If I test positive can my family members work or go to school?**

If they are not deemed close contacts themselves, they may attend school or report to work as long as they are not presenting symptoms. If any symptoms present themselves, individuals are urged to monitor themselves and to communicate with their primary care provider to determine if they should be tested.

**I have heard that someone from my office or school has been identified as a confirmed case of COVID-19 – why hasn't the COVID Task Force contacted me?**

If you are not a PUI, you will not be called for contact tracing purposes. If you are concerned that you may have been exposed to a positive case, you may register for community based testing or send a message to COVID Testing at <https://covidtesting.chcc.health/>.

**Will student/staff/teacher results be shared with the school or district?**

The COVID-19 Task Force communicates directly with persons identified as being positive and does not share that information with school personnel unless the testing is done on site and the principal makes the initial contact with families.

**Can the school or office share a name of the student or staff member who is a confirmed case of Covid-19?**

No, PSS cannot share the name of the person who has tested positive for COVID-19. This information is private and confidential. Close contacts will not be told the name of the confirmed case.

**How long can COVID-19 be detected in my system after I have recovered?**

The COVID-19 virus can be detected up to 90 days after recovering from it. This does not mean that you are contagious or that you cannot be re-infected so you should monitor yourself closely to ensure that any symptoms you have are not related to COVID-19. The virus may also show up in testing for 90 days, so monitoring your symptoms is important to ensure you remain healthy.

**What if the press media or wider school community contact the district/school?**

Your information is confidential, PSS may share the data regarding numbers of positive cases but will not share names or identifiable information.

The following is a generic statement that offices/schools may wish to consider using in full or part in response to press/media queries.

"The school cannot comment on individual cases or outbreaks of COVID-19 to protect the privacy and confidentiality of those involved. The school can confirm that we have engaged with The COVID-19 Task Force. The Task Force's role includes carrying out a risk assessment. As part of this risk assessment, all close contacts will be identified, contacted, and advised of the next steps. If the Task Force does not make contact with you, you are not impacted and can continue to attend school. The school will continue to work with the Task Force in ensuring all necessary hygiene, health and safety protocols are in place at the school for the prevention and containment of COVID-19."

## **PRIVACY STATEMENT**

The CNMI Public School System is committed to protecting the personal health information that may be disclosed to schools for the purpose of contact tracing and should only be used for that purpose. School boards/schools/child care operators have an obligation to protect the personal health information of their students and staff. The identity of cases should not be disclosed to parents, or to other students unless deemed necessary by Public Health Officials.

