August 11th

Dear Superintendent,

The New York State Education Department announced on August 10th that they will be providing "Back to School Guidance." As the COVID-19 pandemic is a fluid situation with many changes, we have compiled a current list of Frequently Asked Questions about schools and COVID-19 this fall. This list will be updated as the situation changes.

Frequently Asked Questions

What guidance for schools is currently available?

NYSED has informed schools that "Back to School" guidance is forthcoming. CDC has continued to update its guidance https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html, which includes discussion of prevention strategies such as vaccination promotion, mask use, physical distancing, screening testing, ventilation, handwashing, staying home when sick. This guidance also includes considerations when it comes to lunchtime, sports and busing.

Do schools and school districts still need to report cases and school close contacts to Nassau County Department of Health?

Positive cases with appropriate school contact tracing should be reported to Nassau County Department of Health. Directions will be available on the Nassau County Health Department website. NYS Department of Health School Specialists may follow up directly with schools and school districts upon reporting. In addition, School Specialists may assist with any guidance requested. School administrators may continue to consult with their contact at the health department for any challenging situations or issues.

What is a close contact?

Someone who was within 6 feet of an infected person (laboratory-confirmed or a clinically compatible illness) for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period (for example, three individual 5-minute exposures for a total of 15 minutes). An infected person can spread SARS-CoV-2 starting from 2 days before they have any symptoms (or, for asymptomatic patients, 2 days before the positive specimen collection date), until they meet criteria for discontinuing home isolation. Close contacts must be quarantined.
How does one get a release from isolation or quarantine?
Releases are automated from the NYS system when the criteria for isolation and/or quarantine have been met. The best way to assure that a release is provided, is for the case or the contact to stay in communication with the case investigator or contact tracer. If this communication does not occur, NCDOH cannot guarantee a formal release documentation and schools must assure that the criteria have been met.

Is there a role for screening testing for school communities?
Schools may choose to do surveillance testing, though it is not required by Nassau County Department of Health. Surveillance testing has been conducted in some school communities for certain high-risk sports for example, or when transmission has increased.

Sincerely,

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Lawrence Eisenstein, MD, MPH, FACP
Commissioner of Health