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August 12, 2022

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Superintendents and Charter Leaders

**FROM:** Dr. Kurt Steinhaus, Cabinet Secretary, Public Education Department

**RE:** Updated Masking, Testing, Quarantine, and Test to Stay Requirements in Schools

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In response to newly released guidance by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) contained in the [Operational Guidance for K-12 Schools and Early Care and Education Programs to Support Safe In-Person Learning](#), and a corresponding update to the [Public Health Emergency Order](#) from the New Mexico Department of Health on August 12, 2022, the New Mexico Public Education is updating the *COVID-19 Response Toolkit for New Mexico's Public Schools* as follows.

- The statewide requirement for school workers who are not up to date with COVID-19 vaccinations to test for COVID-19 in schools weekly has been lifted. The decision for when and whether testing will be required is the determination of a local school district or charter school. The CDC suggests that local decision be guided by the local COVID -19 Community Level.
- The statewide requirement to quarantine for school staff and students who are not up to date with COVID-19 vaccinations and who are exposed to COVID-19 has been lifted. The recommendation of the CDC is that close contacts of a positive case should wear a well-fitting mask and be tested. The decision for when and whether quarantine will be required is the determination of a local school district or charter school and should be based on the local COVID-19 Community Level.
- The statewide requirement for students and school staff to participate in the Test to Stay Program has been lifted. The decision for when and whether testing will be required is the determination of a local school district or charter school.
- The statewide requirement for mask wearing in schools was lifted last school year and will not be changed for the new school year. Mask requirements remain a determination of a local school district or charter school.

Schools, school districts, and charter schools drafting COVID-19 testing policies may wish to provide [diagnostic testing](#) for students and staff with symptoms of COVID-19 or who were exposed to someone with COVID-19 in the school setting, or refer them to a community testing site, healthcare provider, or to use an at-home test. The CDC will provide up to 10 million tests per month nationally to schools for testing. The DOH Office of School and Adolescent Health will coordinate monthly requests for those tests.

At high [COVID-19 Community Levels](#), school districts or charter schools may wish to consider implementing screening testing for students and staff for high-risk activities (for example, close contact sports, band, choir, theater); at key times in the year, for example before/after large events (such as prom, tournaments, group travel); and when returning from breaks (such as holidays, spring break, at the beginning of the school year).

As schools, school districts, and charter schools are drafting quarantine policies, those who maintain quarantine requirements may also wish to consider offering a Test to Stay program. Further, while people exposed to COVID-19 are no longer required to quarantine, the CDC recommends that they wear a mask for 10 days from exposure and to get tested on or after day 5.

Schools, school districts, and charter schools should put in place a core set of infectious disease prevention strategies as part of normal operations. The addition and layering of COVID-19-specific prevention strategies should be tied to the [COVID-19 Community Levels](#) and community or setting-specific context, such as availability of resources, health status of students, and age of population served. Enhanced prevention strategies also may be necessary in response to an outbreak in schools, school districts, and charter school settings.

In January 2020, the Public Education Department issued a memorandum on tribal consultation. LEAs must respect tribal sovereignty and adhere to the requirements of Tribal Public Health Orders and emergency declarations related to COVID-19. These requirements are to coincide with the model of school operation and masking requirements chosen by local authorities.

As a reminder, because of the continuing federal grant to the New Mexico Department of Health, weekly positive tests must still be reported in the DOH provider portal.

This memo is an amendment to the Public Education Department's *COVID-19 Response Toolkit for New Mexico's Public Schools* and remains in effect until such time as the Toolkit is updated to include the amended guidance. All other COVID-safe practices and requirements in the toolkit remain in effect, including the requirement for staff, contractors, and volunteers to isolate if sick with COVID-19.