



Flathead City-County Health Department

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August 24, 2021

To: Parents of Children in Flathead County Schools

From: Joe Russell, Health Officer

Re: Isolation and Quarantine Protocols in Flathead County Schools

Early identification of infected persons with COVID-19 disease and rapid response is critical in the school setting. Rapid response is enhanced with strong communication and clearly established responsibilities between the Health Department and schools. This memorandum describes the Health Department's position on isolation and quarantine.

- If someone tests positive for COVID-19 (**infected person**), that person will have a mandatory 10-day isolation period from the onset of symptoms or the laboratory testing date if onset of symptom date is not readily identifiable. A health care provider will be the first contact to the infected person or their parent/guardian and will instruct the patient to isolate. The Health Department will follow-up as soon as notified of the positive laboratory result.
- If someone is exposed based on proximity and duration to someone who tests positive for COVID-19, that person is a **close contact** and is advised to quarantine with certain exceptions listed below. An infected person is capable of transmitting disease 48 hours prior to symptom onset or date of testing if they are asymptomatic. Criteria of exposure must include this pre-symptomatic period.
- A close contact (through proximity and duration of exposure) in a school setting is defined as:
 - Someone who is within six feet of an infected person for a cumulative duration of 15 minutes within a 24-hour period (three 5-minute exposures with 24 hours is a close contact). **Exception:** The close contact definition excludes students who were within 3 to 6 feet of an infected student if both the infected student and the exposed student(s) correctly and consistently wore a well-fitting mask the entire time.
 - Quarantine will not be advised for any person who is a lab-identified COVID-19 case infected within the past 90 days. Status will be verified through the State of Montana's infectious disease surveillance and reporting system.

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- CDC guidance (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/quarantine.html>) advises that if you are fully vaccinated, (14 days past completing the Moderna and Pfizer 2 dose series or single dose of Janssen Johnson and Johnson) quarantine is not necessary unless you develop symptoms associated with COVID-19 illness. CDC advises fully vaccinated close contacts to wear a mask when out in public for 14 days after last day of exposure to a positive COVID-19 case and get tested 3-5 days after exposure.

Quarantine time periods are as follows:

- A ten (10) day quarantine period is advised for all close contacts. Quarantine will end on the date specified by the Health Department and return to the school setting on day eleven (11) if the person is free of COVID-19 symptoms.
- The quarantine period may be shortened to seven (7) days with following guidance:
 - Five days after exposure, a person advised to quarantine may test for the presence/absence of COVID-19 disease. If the laboratory test is negative and the person has no symptoms at the seventh day of quarantine, the person may return to the school setting on day eight. Be advised that the shortest duration of quarantine is seven days. For determining the absence of disease, either a PCR test performed by a certified molecular laboratory or a rapid antigen test performed by a health care provider is necessary.

If you have any questions regarding this matter, please call Joe Russell at 406-751-8155.

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