

				occur until the next designated pooled PCR testing day.
*Schools will have a designated day to perform pooled testing, but not every schools pooled testing day will be Monday.				

When COVID-19 community transmission reaches emergency levels as determined by Maine CDC and physical distancing is again required, schools that choose to participate in the Pooled PCR Testing program are not required to adhere to 3-foot spacing in school, except during meals, where 6-feet of distancing still applies. Moving below the 3-foot distancing recommendation during emergency applies only to schools where 30% of the school’s total students/staff population, participate in the Pooled PCR Testing program. If a school is in an outbreak status, then spacing requirements may return. For further guidance on pooled testing protocol and guidance, please review the materials provided in [Maine Pooled PCR Testing Guidance for K-12 Schools](#) and [Maine’s K-12 Pooled PCR Testing Program Frequently Asked Questions](#). This includes required steps to participate, preconditions for pooled testing, vendor information, and logistics.

No matter a school’s pooled testing participation status, in the event of a positive case, contact tracing and isolation still apply. Note also that someone can have close contacts outside of their own pool and not all pool-mates will necessarily be close contacts. Pools are not formed on the basis of close contact determination.

Schools also have the option of using BinaxNOW as a standalone tool and should review the [guidance materials from DHHS](#).

**F. Isolation and Quarantine**

Students, teachers, or staff who test positive for COVID-19 shall isolate until they meet the U.S. CDC criteria for release for [isolation](#).

Close contacts must be notified for every COVID-19 case in students or staff (see Appendix A, 2<sup>nd</sup> letter). The close contact definition is exposure within 6 ft for more than 15 minutes within a 24-hour period or any direct physical contact. Close contacts must quarantine for 10 days from COVID-19 exposure from school and school activities **except** if at least one of the following conditions applies to the close contact:

1. The close contact (staff or student) is vaccinated and if the exposure occurred more than 14 days after the individual’s completion of the vaccine series. If the exposure occurred after vaccination but prior to the 14 days, the close contact must quarantine for the full time period: **or**
2. The close contact (staff or student) has a previous positive COVID-19 test result (molecular or antigen) collected within 90 days of the exposure: **or**
3. The close contact (staff or student) participates in weekly school pooled testing **and** the exposure was a school exposure; **or**
4. The school has a mandatory masking policy. If so, then an exposed classroom **student** does not need to quarantine from regular school-day activities when the student close contact was at least 3 feet from an infected student (laboratory-confirmed or a [clinically compatible illness](#)) provided that:
  - i. The school enforces consistent and correct use of well-fitting masks; **and**
  - ii. no direct physical contact occurred.

Exception #4 is limited to classroom exposures only. Exposures that occur in buses, cafeterias, and school-sponsored activities are not eligible for exception #4. The exception does not apply to teachers, staff or other adults in the classroom.

Staff and students who do not fall within exceptions 1-4 above must quarantine if they are a close contact, regardless of the location of exposure. Although pooled testing participants do not need to quarantine from school/school activities if exposure occurs at school, they must follow Maine CDC guidelines for community exposure. All unvaccinated close contacts (participating in pooled testing or not) must quarantine outside of class and other school-based functions (e.g., sports or extracurricular activities).

**Table 2: Summary of Quarantine Exceptions**

Quarantine Status (see 1-4 under “F. Isolation & Quarantine”)	Community Quarantine?	Classroom Quarantine?	Quarantine from school-related sports and activities?	School notification?
Exception 1: Vaccination	No	No	No	Letter
Exception 2: 90 days	No	No	No	Letter
Exception 3: Pooled testing	Yes	No	No	Letter
Exception 4: School with universal masking	Students			
	Yes	No	Yes	Letter + Sara Alert
	Staff	Yes	Yes	Letter + Sara Alert
No exceptions or symptomatic	Yes	Yes	Yes	Letter + Sara Alert

In a school setting, close contacts may range from a few people in a classroom, an entire classroom to the entire school, depending on the number and location of confirmed cases. Tables 3 and 4 summarize the public health actions that can be taken in response to cases detected within schools depending on the mitigation practices within classes.

**Table 3: Public Health Actions for COVID-19 in Schools Without Assigned Seating Who Do Not Participate in Pooled Testing**

Number of Cases	Location	Testing **	Quarantine ***	Cleaning/Closure	Notes
1 or 2	Single classroom/cohorts/pod	All students/staff within the classroom	All students/staff in the classroom	Routine cleaning	Additional potential locations for close contacts include busses, after-school activities, etc.
1 or 2	Two or more classrooms/cohorts/pod	All students/staff within both classrooms	All students/staff in the classrooms	Routine cleaning	Additional potential locations for close contacts include busses, after-school activities, etc.
3+ (outbreak*)	Single classroom/cohort/pod	All students/staff within the classroom	All students/staff in the classroom	Routine cleaning	Additional potential locations for close contacts include busses, after-school activities, etc.
3+ (outbreak*)	Multiple classrooms/cohorts/pods	All students/staff in the same classrooms, cohorts, pods, buses, and extracurricular activities are considered close contacts and are recommended to be tested.  Close contacts may expand to include the entire school depending on the epidemiological investigation, considering factors	All students in the same classrooms, cohorts, pods, buses, and extracurricular activities are considered close contacts and will need to quarantine for 10 days, regardless of test results  Close contacts may expand to include the entire school depending on the epidemiological investigation, considering factors such as adherence with	Routine cleaning	Additional potential locations for close contacts include busses, after-school activities, etc.  If and only if students are cohorted in one classroom, it is possible that only affected classrooms will be closed.