

ARCHIVE: COVID-19 Superintendent Call

July 29, 2020

The following are questions asked by directors of schools during this call and the answers provided by the department. For additional guidance and up-to-the-minute supports, please check the TDOE website for more information:

<https://www.tn.gov/education/health-and-safety/update-on-coronavirus.html>.

People in a given space

- **Question:** In the aftermath of an incident, schools are told to reduce the number of people in a given space. How many people, or what percentage?
 - **Response:** There are no hard and fast numbers because every incident is different and unique, but anytime you can reduce the number of people in a space, you reduce the risk of transmission.

Numbers

- **Question:** What numbers should districts use to track the spread of COVID-19 in their respective areas?
 - **Response:** Districts should consider numbers provided by their local health officials, the State, and what they know about your district. In addition to county-level numbers, school-age numbers are in the downloadable data sets section of the Department of Health's COVID page. The State will also make White House criteria public in the coming days, which will define the low/moderate/high classifications. These criteria should NOT be used as triggers for the opening or closing of schools, but rather inform the district of the measures they need to consider in order to maintain in-person learning. Epidemiology and Surveillance Data Dashboard

HIPPA

- **Question:** How should we navigate HIPPA regulations while doing contact tracing?
 - **Response:** You can share any information that will enable healthy decisions and save lives as long as you do not disclose the identity of the individual or details of their condition that may cause them to be identified.

Contact tracing

- **Question:** What should we do about contact tracing when local officials do not have the capability?
 - **Response:** Districts can assist their local health departments by notifying close contacts, instructing them to quarantine, and notifying public health. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the local public health department to perform contact tracing. Any assistance the district can provide greatly improves this process and prevents ongoing exposures in schools.
 - From Tennessee Department of Health Recommendations for Management
 - Contact your local health department as soon as you are made aware of a suspect or confirmed case of COVID-19.
 - Assist the health department in identifying contacts of the infected individual
 - The Case Interview Script for LEA's may be helpful in identifying contacts of the infected individual.
 - Contacts are to self-quarantine for 14 days from their last contact with the infected individual

Definition

- **Question:** Is there a definition for low, moderate, or high community spread?
 - **Response:** The State will be adopting the White House criteria for defining low/moderate/high community spread. These criteria are based upon percent positivity of testing and the rate of new cases in the community. TDH anticipates sharing a map based on these criteria in the coming days.

HIPPA

- **Question:** Is the 6' social distancing standard for students and staff? The American Academy of Pediatrics is saying that 3' is sufficient. What if a school does not have a school nurse? Who should screen students, and what is the protocol that should be followed in the absence of medical personnel?
 - **Response:** TDH recommends that all students and adults always follow the guidance to wear cloth face coverings and attempt to maintain a distance of at least six feet from each other. For young children, if space does not allow desks to be six feet away, it is acceptable, but not preferred, for desks to be placed three feet away from each other. The wearing of face coverings is especially important when the distance between students is narrowed. Anyone can provide temperature and symptom screening. .

- **From the CDC guidelines:** In general, the closer, longer, and more frequent the interaction between students, teachers, and staff, the higher the risk of respiratory droplets being passed between people. Therefore, CDC recommends keeping a distance of at least 6 feet from other people, in addition to practicing other behaviors that reduce the spread of COVID-19 like wearing cloth face coverings, washing hands often with soap and water, and staying home when sick. Additionally, it is important to ensure that ventilation systems operate properly to increase the circulation of outdoor air as much as possible.
- When maintaining 6 feet of distance is not feasible, try keeping as close to 6 feet apart as possible, recognizing that the closer you are, the more likely it is for respiratory droplets to be passed between people. In situations where maintaining physical distance is difficult, it is especially important to wear cloth face coverings. In areas where it is difficult for individuals to remain at least 6 feet apart (e.g., reception desks), schools can consider additional strategies such as installing physical barriers, such as sneeze guards and partitions. Schools can also consider using outdoor space, weather-permitting, to enable social distancing.