



# Okaloosa County School District COVID-19 Information for Parents



2021-2022 School Year

**Updated 09/13/2021**

**All Measures Effective Until Further Notice**

**Student health and safety continues to be a top priority as we return to more normal school operations.**

The Florida Department of Education and the Florida Department of Health released information on August 6<sup>th</sup>, four days prior to the opening of our school year, directing how the quarantining and isolation of students will be conducted in schools across the state of Florida. Based on this information, we have made some adjustments to our plan that was released to schools and families on July 28<sup>th</sup>. Our plan continues to emphasize keeping healthy students in school, maintaining enhanced cleaning and sanitizing practices, protecting medically fragile students, and providing continuity of academic services for students who miss school due to COVID-19 quarantine or isolation mandates from the Department of Health.

Student health and safety includes not only physical health and safety, but also academic health, mental health, and social-emotional well-being. A recent survey of school districts across the country found that 74% reported multiple indicators of increased mental health stresses among students during the pandemic. In Okaloosa County, we have also seen learning loss among students who have been disconnected from school the past sixteen months.

Being in school is critical for the overall well-being of our students. Our plans for this year strike a sensible balance that emphasizes your student's success at school while also being mindful of the steps we need to take to keep our school environments safe.

Teachers, administrators, and support staff have been preparing this summer for a return to more normal school operations. The first day of school is August 10<sup>th</sup>, and we are excited to welcome our students back! We will retain critical practices that were established last year to keep our schools clean and sanitized.

Below are answers to questions that parents have asked this summer and will help you plan for the upcoming school year. Families may contact their child's school if they have additional questions or visit our website ([www.okaloosaschools.com](http://www.okaloosaschools.com)) throughout the school year for up-to-date information regarding COVID-19.

**1. Are there currently any Emergency Orders or Rules in Florida or in Okaloosa County involving schools and COVID-19?**

Yes.

**July 30:** Governor DeSantis issued Executive Order 21-175, which directed the Department of Education and Department of Health to work together to immediately execute rules and take any additional agency action necessary to ensure safety protocols for controlling the spread of COVID-19 in schools. Any action taken by DOE and DOH must, at a minimum, be in accordance with Florida's "Parents' Bill of Rights" and protect parents' rights to make decisions regarding masking of their children in relation to COVID-19.

**August 6:** The State Board of Education issued Emergency Rule 6AER21-01 addressing attendance for students who are quarantined due to COVID-19. The State Board of Education also issued Emergency Rule 6AER21-02 which expands Hope Scholarship opportunities.

**August 6:** The Florida Department of Health issued Emergency Rule 6DER21-12 Protocols for Controlling COVID-19 in School Settings with guidelines for isolation and quarantine as a result of COVID-19.

2. **What COVID-19 protocols are currently in place (additional protocols implemented September 13<sup>th</sup>)?**

- Before school
  - Parents should conduct a health screener on their student each morning and KEEP THEIR STUDENT HOME if they exhibit COVID-19 symptoms. Symptoms include fever greater than 100.4°, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath or difficult breathing, headache, body or muscle aches, GI symptoms (nausea, vomiting, diarrhea), new loss of taste or smell, nasal congestion/runny nose.
  - Staff must conduct a health screening prior to coming to work each day and should stay home if they exhibit COVID-19 symptoms.
  - NOTE: A student or employee's baseline should be assessed when symptoms are observed. Are any of the above symptoms normal for the student or staff member, for example, a runny nose or congestion with history of allergies? If so, that would be considered the individual's baseline. If there are any symptoms that are not normal for you, (symptoms outside of your baseline), i.e, fever or shortness of breath, the individual should stay home and seek testing.
- School Buses
  - Masks are strongly recommended while riding a school bus. Buses will have a supply of masks available for students.
  - Students will use hand sanitizer when entering and exiting a school bus.
  - Buses will be cleaned and disinfected after each morning and afternoon run.
  - Students will be required to sit in an assigned seat.
- School Campuses
  - Strongly recommend the use of masks when social distancing cannot be maintained. Schools have a supply of masks available.
  - Suspend the use of drinking from water fountains. Water fountains and/or water bottle filling stations are available in schools. Each student will be offered a water bottle that can be used throughout the day. Students may bring their own water bottles.
  - Monitor and direct student movement in hallways between classes to minimize extended student contact.
  - Disinfect frequently touched surfaces throughout the day (door handles, light switches, tables, water fountains, and water bottle filling stations).
  - Replace all AC filters frequently - Maintenance.
  - Display signs reminding those in schools about social distancing and the use of hand sanitizer/washing of hands.
  - Suspend field trips during the school day until further notice.

- Suspend indoor large group gatherings during the school day until further notice.
- Cafeterias
  - Provide **scheduled** opportunities for students to wash their hands or use hand sanitizer before and after eating.
  - Monitor breakfast and lunch lines to facilitate as much spacing as possible between students while in line.
  - Increase physical distance to the extent possible between students during breakfast and lunch by providing additional indoor/outdoor eating locations.
- Classrooms
  - Hand sanitizer is available at the entrance of every classroom for student and staff use.
  - Each classroom has a supply of disinfectant wipes and staff will clean student desks/tables between classes. Students may assist where appropriate.
  - Classrooms will be cleaned and spray-disinfected at the end each day.
  - **Desk barriers** will be available upon request by parents and may be used at a teacher's discretion.
  - Proper handwashing will continue to be emphasized and will be scheduled in elementary classrooms.
  - Sharing of items should be avoided to the extent possible. Items should be cleaned between use if shared.
  - Elementary - keep students in cohorts while in the school building.
- Visitors/Volunteers
  - Suspend parents and other visitors in cafeterias until further notice.
  - Parents will be permitted to come to school for parent conferences; schools may encourage virtual meetings where/when feasible.
  - Visitors and essential volunteers are permitted as determined by the principal.
  - Mentors may meet with a student as approved by the parent and principal.
- Voluntary Vaccination Clinics
  - Voluntary vaccination clinics for students (age 12+) and staff at area middle and high schools have been scheduled for September 20-22 (1<sup>st</sup> shot). Follow up shots are scheduled for October 12-14. Contact your child's school for specific dates, times, and a consent form. (NOTE: A individual is considered fully vaccinated two weeks after they receive their second shot.)
- Testing Site
  - COVID-19 testing has been a challenge for many of our families in Okaloosa County. As a result, the Okaloosa County School District has partnered with the Department of Health to provide a COVID-19 testing site for **SYMPTOMATIC** students and employees.
  - Per DOH – **At this time, this testing is only for symptomatic individuals. In order to return to school, an individual must receive a NEGATIVE result AND have NO SYMPTOMS (see Section 2 of the OCSD Decision Tree).**

- Location: OCSD Central Administrative Complex, 202 Highway 85N, Niceville, FL
- Hours of Operation: Monday-Friday 7:45 a.m. – 11:45 a.m. **BY APPT. ONLY.** To schedule an appointment, go to <https://tinyurl.com/4sbf4kxb>.

3. **Will masks be mandatory in schools this fall?**

No. Masks are strongly recommended in our school building but not mandated. Parents are welcome to provide a mask for their child if they choose. Schools will have a supply of masks available.

4. **Will masks be mandatory on school buses?**

No. Masks are recommended on school buses. Parents are welcome to provide a mask for their child if they choose. Buses will have a supply of masks available.

5. **What are the COVID-19 symptoms?**

Fever greater than 100.4°, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath or difficult breathing, headache, body or muscle aches, GI symptoms (nausea, vomiting, diarrhea), new loss of taste or smell, nasal congestion/runny nose.

6. **Will wellness/temperature checks be done daily upon arrival to school?**

No. Parents are encouraged to monitor their students for symptoms before school each day. Please keep your child home from school if they exhibit any COVID-19 symptoms.

## Florida Department of Health COVID-19 Case and Contact Management Requirements

### Florida DOH Emergency Rule 64DER21-12

#### (I) Students with COVID-19 symptoms and no test results

- (a) Stay home from school.
- (b) Do not attend community activities, school-sponsored activities or be on school property until one of the following conditions is met:
  - (i) Isolate at home until the student receives a negative diagnostic COVID-19 test (PCR or Antigen) AND has no symptoms. **OR**
  - (ii) If no COVID-19 testing done, isolate ten days from symptom onset. Student has had no fever for a minimum of 24-hours and other symptoms are improving. **OR**
  - (iii) Receives written permission to return to school from a medical doctor or physician, or advanced nurse practitioner licensed in Florida.

#### (II) Students with a positive test for COVID-19 (with or without symptoms)

- (a) Stay home from school. Do not attend community activities, school-sponsored activities or be on school property.
- (b) Notify the school of positive result, provide a copy of result as requested to the school.
- (c) Do not attend school-sponsored activities or be on school property until one of the following conditions is met.
  - (i) Isolate at home until the student receives a negative diagnostic COVID-19 test (PCR or Antigen) AND has no symptoms. **OR**

- (ii) Isolate ten days from symptom onset for those experiencing symptoms, or ten days from the date of a positive test if student had no symptoms. Student must not have had a fever for a minimum of 24-hours and other symptoms are improving. **OR**
- (iii) Receives written permission to return to school from a medical doctor or physician, or advanced nurse practitioner licensed in Florida.

**(III) COVID-19 Close Contacts - Unvaccinated with no symptoms**

- (a) Stay home from school. Do not attend community activities, school-sponsored activities or be on school property until one or more of the following is met:
  - (i) Receive a negative diagnostic COVID-19 test (PCR or Ellume Rapid Antigen) after four days from the date of last exposure. Test is obtained on Day 5 or later. **OR**
  - (ii) Seven days have passed since the date of last exposure to the COVID-19 positive individual. Student returns to school on Day 8.

**(IV) COVID-19 Close Contacts - Unvaccinated with symptoms**

- (a) Stay home from school. Do not attend community activities, school-sponsored activities or be on school property
- (b) Do not attend school-sponsored activities or be on school property until one of the following conditions is met.
  - (i) Isolate at home until the student receives a negative diagnostic COVID-19 test (PCR or Antigen) AND has no symptoms. **OR**
  - (ii) Isolate ten days from symptom onset. Student must not have had a fever for a minimum of 24-hours and other symptoms are improving. **OR**
  - (iii) Receives written permission to return to school from a medical doctor or physician, or advanced nurse practitioner licensed in Florida.

**(V) COVID-19 Close Contacts - Fully vaccinated students or students with prior COVID-19 in past 90 days from most recent exposure**

- (a) Not subject to the protocols in section (3) per Rule 64DER21-12. Student does not need to quarantine if they remain ASYMPTOMATIC (well).
- (b) If student develops SYMPTOMS follow these steps (same as in Section 4):
  - (i) Stay home from school. Do not attend community activities, school-sponsored activities or be on school property
  - (ii) Do not attend school-sponsored activities or be on school property until one of the following conditions is met.
    1. Isolate at home until the student receives a negative diagnostic COVID-19 test (PCR or Antigen) AND has no symptoms. **OR**
    2. Isolate ten days from symptom onset. Student must not have had a fever for a minimum of 24-hours and other symptoms are improving. **OR**
    3. Receives written permission to return to school from a medical doctor or physician, or advanced nurse practitioner licensed in Florida.

**7. How are positive COVID-19 cases being reported?**

Positive COVID-19 cases are being reported for each school on our COVID-19 Dashboard, which is located on our district website, [www.okaloosaschools.com](http://www.okaloosaschools.com). The number of positive COVID-19 cases at each school is taken from the Department of Health database. At this time, information is being updated daily.

**8. If one student in a classroom becomes positive for COVID-19, is the whole class required to quarantine?**

No, not necessarily. Contact tracing is done in accordance with DOH guidance – close contacts are identified as those who are within 6 ft of a confirmed positive COVID-19 case for 15 minutes cumulatively during a 24-hour period.

**9. Will students who are isolated or quarantined be able to make up their schoolwork?**

Yes. Please contact your school for information on receiving make up work.

**10. What if my child is medically fragile and plans to remain in brick-and-mortar instruction?**

Parents of medically fragile students should contact their school to learn more about individualized safety measures for their student. Schools will have procedures to ensure individualized safety measures for medically fragile students.

**11. Will absences due to quarantine related to COVID-19 be excused?**

Absences due to isolation and or quarantine in which a student is not well enough to work will be excused with a parent or doctor note. The student will be able to make up work in these situations.

Quarantined students who are at home but actively engaged in work provided by their teachers will be in attendance (not marked absent) per State Board of Education Emergency Rule 6AER21-01.

**12. COVID-19 cancelled or modified many different types of school events last year, such as field trips and athletic and performing arts events. Will these return to normal this year?**

Athletic events and extracurricular activities such as band and choral concerts will occur as normal. All field trips during the school day have been cancelled until further notice. We will be mindful as we move into the school year and make adjustments as appropriate.

**13. Will parents be able to volunteer in classrooms this fall and chaperone trips?**

At this time, essential volunteers will be permitted on campus at the discretion of the principal. All field trips during the school day have been cancelled until further notice.

**14. Will mySchool Online be an option this year?**

No. The mySchool Online program, and others like it across the state, are not available options this year. Okaloosa Online is the district's primary K-12 virtual option. Information about this option is available at [www.okaloosaschools.com/schools/okaloosa-online](http://www.okaloosaschools.com/schools/okaloosa-online).

We will all continue to be mindful of our surroundings and be prepared to adjust our routines if needed.

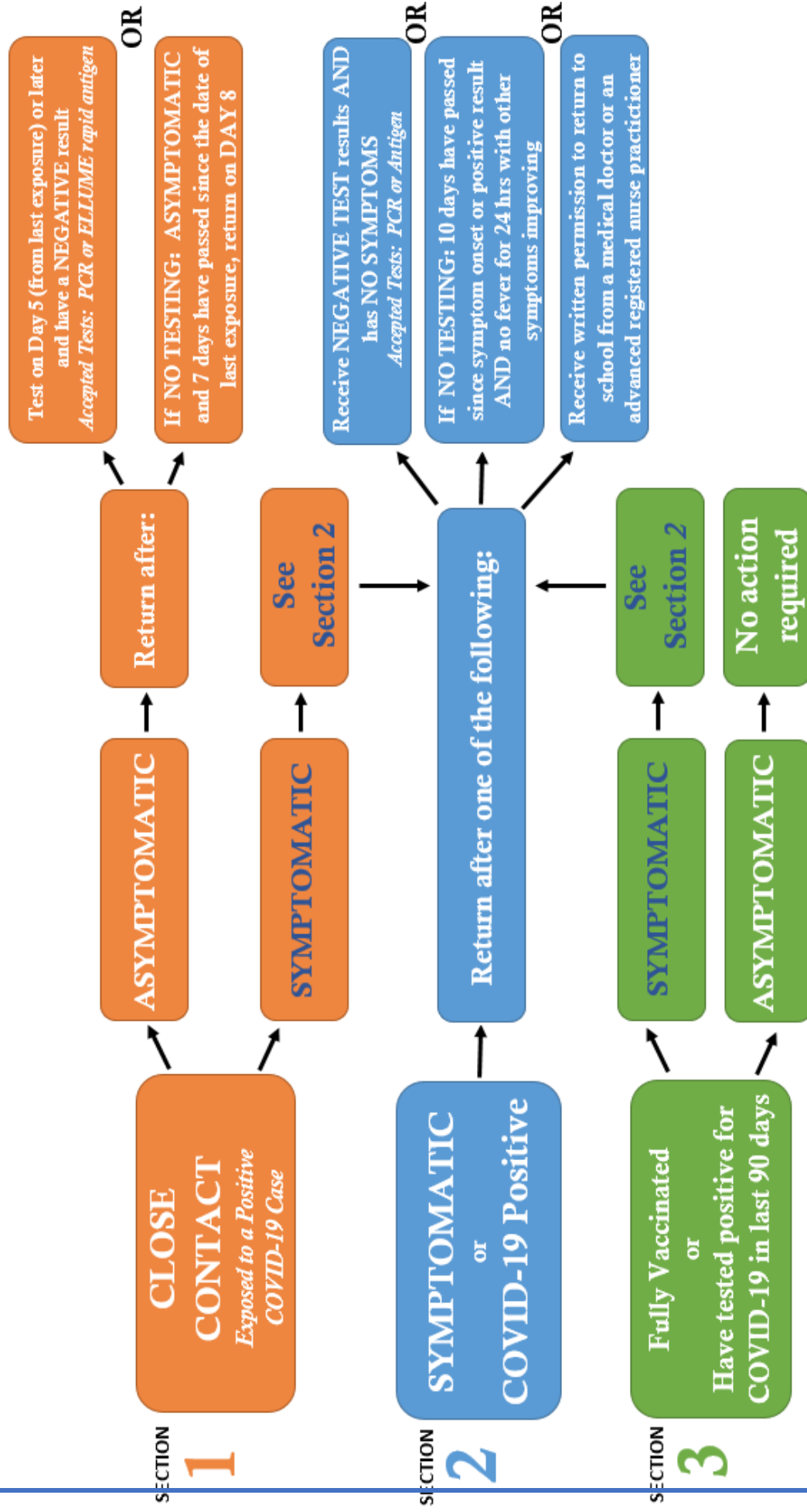
Please contact your child's school for more information.

Note: The protocols for Eglin Elementary School on Eglin Air Force Base will be in accordance with the ICD guidance for the installation.

# OKALOOSA COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

## COVID-19 Decision Tree

Per FL Department of Health Emergency Rule 64DER21-12



### HOME TESTS

In order for the Department of Health to accept home test results, the test must be administered as outlined in the package directions. Parents must download an app **BEFORE** administering the test. The verified test result will be provided via the app or an email. This documentation should be provided to the school. **NOTE: The ONLY home test approved by the FDA and FL DOH for a NEGATIVE RESULT is an ELLUME.**

