



Okaloosa County School District COVID-19 Information for Parents



2021-2022 School Year

Updated 8-19-2021

Additional Temporary Measures Take Effect Friday, August 20th, 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 Friday afternoon, 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 28th. 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 10th, 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) 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 safety measures will be in place to start the school year?

- Hand sanitizer will be available in every classroom, on school buses, and in other common areas.
- Each classroom will be provided disinfectant wipes.
- Daily cleaning and disinfecting protocols will be in place in schools and on buses.
- Masks are recommended in schools and on buses. Schools and buses will have a supply of masks available.
- Signs will be displayed to remind those in schools about social distancing and the use of hand sanitizer/washing of hands.
- Desk barriers will be available upon request by parents and may be used at a teacher's discretion.
- To minimize the use of water fountains, water bottle filling stations will be available in schools.
- Proper handwashing will continue to be emphasized.
- District will support COVID-19 contact tracing mandated by Florida Department of Health Emergency Rule 64DER21-12.
- **Voluntary COVID-19 vaccination clinics will be available at secondary school sites Sept 20-22. Exact times and locations will be available soon.**
- **Temporarily suspend parents and visitors in cafeterias.**
- **Parents will be permitted to come to school for parent conferences; schools may encourage virtual meetings where/when possible.**
- **Visitors with official business are permissible**
- **Essential volunteers are permitted as determined by the principal**
- **Mentors may meet with a student as approved by the parent and principal**
- **Temporarily suspend field trips during the school day**
- **Temporarily suspend indoor large group gatherings**
- **Recognizing that 6-foot social distancing is not feasible in many school settings, continue to be mindful of spacing in hallways, classrooms, and cafeterias**
- **Parents are urged to keep their children home if they are symptomatic**
- **Working with the Department of Health to establish testing sites for students and staff at selected off campus locations**

3. Will masks be mandatory in schools this fall?

No. Masks are 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 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 district website, 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?

Yes. Our plan is to allow normal school activities such as field trips to resume. Athletic events and extracurricular activities such as band and choral concerts will occur as normal. 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?

Yes. We are pleased to have our parents return to schools as volunteers. The volunteer application can be completed online at www.okaloosaschools.com. We will be mindful and make adjustments as appropriate.

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.

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

