



January 26, 2022

Dear Vestal School Community,

Recently, the New York State Education Department updated guidance regarding contact tracing in schools. Their guidance stated, "Schools are no longer required to contact trace when a student or staff member tests positive, has symptoms of, or is exposed to COVID-19." As a result, the Vestal School District has been in communication with our local health departments and has identified changes to our current practices that align with the above language in the NYSED memo. Please see FAQs below for important updates.

**Q1: Will Vestal schools continue to contact trace when a positive student case is identified?**

A1: No. The Vestal Central School District will no longer contract trace when a positive student case is identified in the school setting.

Students will no longer be placed on a quarantine list because of exposure to a positive case within a classroom, on a bus, or during extracurricular activities.

Please refer to the [NYS COVID-19 School Report Card](#) for information regarding positive COVID-19 cases within the Vestal Central School District:

**Q2: Do students need to quarantine if they have been exposed to a positive COVID-19 case at school?**

A2: No. Only individuals who are symptomatic or test positive must stay home.

**Q3: Is the "Test-to-Stay" program still in place for students?**

A3: On January 10, [our District outlined a "test-to-stay" program](#) for in-school close contacts of COVID positive individuals. Given that we are no longer contact tracing for students, this program will be discontinued as of **Monday, January 31, 2022.**

**Q4: What happens if an individual has symptoms as described on the Vestal COVID-19 Daily Screening Guidelines for [Students/Staff](#) ?**

A4: If an individual has COVID-19 symptoms, they will be required to have a negative COVID-19 test and be symptom-free (or have resolving symptoms) before they can return to school. As a reminder, symptoms of COVID-19 include the following:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- Congestion or runny nose
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Diarrhea
- Nausea or vomiting

**Q5: What happens if a student or staff member tests positive for COVID-19?**

A5: If a student or staff member tests positive for COVID-19, they will need to isolate for a minimum of five (5) days and may return as early as day six (6) if symptoms are resolved. Day zero (0) is the day when symptoms began or, for asymptomatic individuals, the day of a positive COVID-19 test. If symptoms are resolved on day six (6) of isolation, then the individual may return to school. If symptoms are not resolved, isolation continues for the full 10-day period.

Individuals *are* allowed to use at-home test results reported by parents and staff. The expectation is that parents and staff who use at-home test kits will advise the district / building if a positive result occurs.

Broome County residents should report positive test results to the Broome County Health Department using the following link:  
<https://redcap.vanderbilt.edu/surveys/?s=7KXH4EJNY4J7NE79>

Tioga County residents should contact the Tioga County Health Department at 607-687-8600.

Local county health departments will continue to issue isolation orders.

**Q6: Are masks required on school buses, in schools, and during extracurricular events?**

A6: Yes, all students, staff, and visitors are expected to wear a mask. Masks are required indoors except when actively eating or drinking.

We understand that New York State's mask rule is currently being challenged in the courts. We will advise the public if there is any future change in our mask protocol.

**Q7: Does the District have COVID-19 test kits to distribute to families and staff?**

A7: We have a limited supply of test kits. Schools will provide kits to symptomatic individuals or to those who request them. Please contact your child's school to make this request.

Because of supply-chain delays, we don't know when the District will receive the next shipment of test kits. Once our supply is exhausted, the District will not be able to distribute test kits until further notice.

**Q8: What happens when a student or staff member is a close contact to a positive case in the household?**

A8: This depends on the vaccination status of the student or staff member. If the individual is fully vaccinated OR has tested positive within the past 90 days, then they do not have to quarantine. If they are not fully vaccinated, then they should quarantine for five days. Please contact your physician or the county health department if you have specific questions.

NOTE: Fully vaccinated means the following:

- The individual has received one dose of the Johnson and Johnson AND, if eligible, a booster.\*
- The individual has received two doses of either the Pfizer or the Moderna vaccine AND, if eligible, a booster.\*

\*The individual must be 14 full days beyond the last dose.

For further information, please see the latest Broome County quarantine and isolation chart: [https://www.vestal.stier.org/Downloads/BC\\_Quar-IsoltnChart01-25-2022.pdf](https://www.vestal.stier.org/Downloads/BC_Quar-IsoltnChart01-25-2022.pdf)

Thank you for your continued patience and understanding.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey J. Ahearn  
Superintendent of Schools