

COVID-19 Health and Safety Guidance for School Year 2023-24



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Hawai'i State
Department of Education



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Introduction

The Hawai'i State Department of Education (Department) and the Hawai'i State Department of Health (DOH) recognize the benefits of children attending school in person, including the fundamental links between education and long-term health outcomes. In-person instruction is particularly important for younger children and those with special educational needs. Social and emotional support resources made available on school campuses are critical to our students, and for some families, food security is provided through school meal programs. Schools promote equity in both health and learning, particularly for groups disproportionately affected by COVID-19.

This guidance document is based on the DOH [COVID-19 Guidance for K-12 Schools](#), aligned with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [Operational Guidance for K-12 Schools and Early Care and Education Programs to Support Safe In-Person Learning](#) and applies to all Department school grades (pre-kindergarten to 12), offices and facilities. Each location is different and not every strategy outlined in this guidance can be practically implemented at all times. All guidance, including this document, is subject to change as new information regarding COVID-19 becomes available.

Everyday Prevention Strategies

Although this guidance is specific to COVID-19, many of the prevention strategies help to reduce the spread of other common infectious diseases such as flu, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and norovirus. The CDC [Operational Guidance for K-12 Schools and Early Care and Education Programs to Support Safe In-Person Learning](#) provides more detailed information on prevention strategies for schools and considerations for specific situations such as residential dorms and high-risk activities.

Stay Up to Date on Vaccinations

Staying up to date on [routine vaccinations](#) is essential to prevent illness from many different infections. Schools can help increase vaccine uptake by providing information, promoting staying up to date, and making it easy and convenient for students, staff and others to get vaccinated.

Stay Home When Sick

People who do not feel well or have any symptoms of illness should stay home. If someone comes to school/work with symptoms of illness or develops symptoms of illness at school/work, they will be sent home or to a healthcare facility depending on symptom severity. Individuals who test positive for COVID-19 or have [symptoms of COVID-19](#) should follow the DOH [Isolation and Exposure Guidance for K-12 Schools](#).

Test

People with [symptoms of COVID-19](#) should [get tested](#) as soon as possible. If exposed to someone with COVID-19, get tested at least five full days after your last exposure, even if no symptoms develop. To find a COVID-19 testing location near you, use the CDC [testing locator](#). Individuals who test positive for COVID-19, have [symptoms of COVID-19](#) or were exposed to someone with COVID-19, should follow the DOH [Isolation and Exposure Guidance for K-12 Schools](#).

If COVID-19 testing is conducted at school, it must be in accordance with applicable rules and regulations such as training, proper personal protective equipment, CLIA certificate or waiver and reporting to the DOH. Consent is required for individuals aged 18 years and older or from a parent(s)/legal guardian(s) for minor students to participate in COVID-19 testing.

Optimize Ventilation

Increase outdoor air intake and improve air filtration to reduce the risk of germs and contaminants spreading through the air.

Hand Hygiene

Teach, reinforce, and practice proper [handwashing](#) to lower the risk of spreading viruses, especially during key times in the day (e.g., before and after eating, after using the restroom and after recess). If handwashing is not possible, provide hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol. Hand sanitizers should be stored up, away, and out of sight of young children and should be used only with adult supervision for children less than six years of age.

Respiratory Etiquette

Teach, reinforce, and practice covering [coughs and sneezes](#) to help keep individuals from getting and spreading infectious diseases.

Clean

Clean at least once a day to remove any virus that may be on surfaces. See the CDC website on [Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility](#) for more information.

Mask

Wearing a [well-fitting mask](#) consistently and correctly reduces the [risk of spreading the virus](#) that causes COVID-19. Anyone who chooses to wear a mask should be supported in their decision to do so.

Additional Mitigation Strategies

Increased mitigation strategies would be beneficial to prevent ongoing spread when there is a cluster of cases, potential outbreak or high levels of COVID-19 in the community. To request technical assistance on mitigation strategies related to clusters or outbreaks, call the DOH

Disease Reporting Line at 808-586-4586 (option 3) or email doh.c19schools@doh.hawaii.gov. The DOH will work with schools to conduct targeted disease investigations if necessary.

Cluster

A **cluster** is defined as three or more students, teachers or staff who have confirmed or probable COVID-19 and are within a specified core group in a 14-day period as long as those cases do not have suspected exposure elsewhere (i.e., they are not close contacts of persons with COVID-19 outside the school setting). A “probable” case is when someone has one or more COVID-19-like symptoms and has been exposed to a person with COVID-19. A “core group” includes, but is not limited to, a classroom, extracurricular activity, before or after school care setting or bus ride. Identifying a cluster of people with COVID-19 does **not** necessarily mean that exposure or spread has occurred in school or at the associated event.

Outbreak

An **outbreak** is when the absentee rate related to confirmed or probable COVID-19 cases (i.e. suspected illness) meets or exceeds:

- 10% of the entire school; or
- 20% of a grade or class.

If a school has a cluster of COVID-19 cases or a potential outbreak, the following additional mitigation strategies should be considered to prevent ongoing spread:

- Universal or targeted (e.g., class or grade) indoor masking while the cluster or outbreak is ongoing and for 10 full days after the last exposure.
- Move activities, classes and meals outdoors when possible.
- Avoid crowding.
- Maximize ventilation by bringing fresh outdoor air into a building or vehicle when possible. See the CDC [Ventilation in Schools and Childcare Programs](#) for additional steps to improve indoor air quality.
- Suspend associated high-risk sports and extracurricular activities (i.e., activities that are indoors, close contact and involve increased exhalation).
- Recommend COVID-19 testing for all students and staff involved in a cluster of cases or outbreak. To find a COVID-19 testing location, use the CDC [testing locator](#).

Responding to COVID-19

Before a Case of COVID-19 Occurs

Review the DOH document [When a Person at a K-12 School Has COVID-19](#).

- Establish a COVID-19 point of contact (POC) at your school/office. Provide the POC telephone number and email address to the school community.
- Be familiar with the following protocols:
 - When someone is sick at school/work;
 - When a COVID-19 case is reported; and
 - When there is a cluster or potential outbreak.

When Someone Is Sick at School/Work

If someone has symptoms of illness or receives a positive COVID-19 test result at school/work:

- Separate the sick person from others in a non-threatening manner.
- Send the person home or to a healthcare facility depending on symptom severity.
- If the person must wait for pick-up, identify an isolation area, ideally not the health room.
 - Choose an area with good ventilation or outdoors.
 - Students must stay within the line of sight of an adult.
 - Offer a mask if the person does not already have one.
 - Have a waste receptacle in the area for used tissues and/or vomit.
 - Designate a bathroom.
- Provide the DOH [Isolation and Exposure Guidance for K-12 Schools](#).

Staff caring for someone who is sick should wear an N95 respirator or double mask with a surgical and tight-fitting cloth mask if a respirator is not available.

When a COVID-19 Case is Reported

Take these steps when a COVID-19 case is reported at a school or office.

Step 1: Provide the DOH [Isolation and Exposure Guidance for K-12 Schools](#) to the COVID-19 case or to the parent(s)/legal guardian(s), if the case is a student.

Step 2: If someone has tested positive for COVID-19 at school, report the case using the [Case Reporting Tool](#) (CRT). See the [COVID-19 CRT Frequently Asked Questions](#) for more information such as how to request a user account. Data from the CRT is used to generate the public reports posted on the Department's [website](#) as required by [law](#). Probable cases (i.e., no positive test result) and COVID-19 cases that have not impacted schools do **not** need to be reported using the CRT unless they are associated with an outbreak.

When There is a Cluster or Potential Outbreak

Reference the section titled, [Additional Mitigation Strategies](#), on pages three and four for the definitions of cluster and outbreak.

Step 1: Notify all impacted staff and parent(s)/legal guardian(s) of students of a suspected cluster of cases or outbreak using [this template](#). Provide the [DOH Isolation and Exposure Guidance for K-12 Schools](#).

Step 2: Report the potential outbreak to DOH. Reporting of clusters to the DOH is not required, but can be performed if technical assistance is desired. **Schools are required to report potential outbreaks** of COVID-19 or influenza-like illness to the DOH. Use the online [Case Reporting Tool](#) (CRT), call the Disease Reporting Line at 808-586-4586 (option 3) or email doh.c19schools@doh.hawaii.gov.

Step 3: Implement additional mitigation strategies to prevent ongoing spread of COVID-19.

Resources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

- [Coughing and Sneezing](#)
(Respiratory Etiquette)
- [COVID-19 Testing: What You Need to Know](#)
- [Immunization Schedules](#)
- [Operational Guidance for K-12 Schools and Early Care and Education Programs to Support Safe In-Person Learning](#)
- [Symptoms of COVID-19 Flier](#)
- [Testing Locator](#)
- [Types of Masks and Respirators](#)
- [Understanding Exposure Risks](#)

- [Ventilation in Schools and Childcare Programs](#)
- [When and How to Clean and Disinfect a Facility](#)
- [When and How to Wash Your Hands](#)

Hawai'i State Department of Education

- [COVID-19 Case Reporting Tool](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [COVID-19 Information and Updates](#)

Hawai'i State Department of Health

- [Case Reporting Tool](#)
- [Guidance for K-12 Schools](#)

[Keiki Heroes](#) provides multilingual resources for young children.

If you have any questions regarding COVID-19 response procedures, please call the number for your island listed below or email doh.c19schools@doh.hawaii.gov.

Island	Hours	Contact	Telephone Number
O'ahu	M-F 7:45 am - 4:30 pm	Disease Reporting Line	(808) 586-4586, Option 3 for Schools (808) 587-6845, Option 3 for Schools
Maui Moloka'i Lāna'i	M-F 7:45 am - 4:30 pm	Maui District Health Office	(808) 984-8213 (School Liaison)
Kaua'i	M-F 7:45 am - 4:30 pm	Kaua'i District Health Office	(808) 241-3387
Hawai'i (Hilo) Hawai'i (Kona)	M-F 7:45 am - 4:30 pm	Big Island District Health Office	(808) 796-0098

After Hours/Weekends/Holidays

O'ahu	(808) 600-3625
Neighbor Islands	(800) 360-2575, toll-free number

Summary of Recent Changes

CDC COVID-19 community level is no longer described as an indicator for mitigation strategies.

Clarification that this guidance applies to DOE preschool settings.

The recommendation is to stay up to date on routine vaccinations and not just COVID-19.

“Stay home when sick” applies more generally to when someone has symptoms of illness; not just COVID-19.

Information about the types of COVID-19 tests has been deleted and there is a hyperlink for a testing locator.

There is no mention of physical distancing (e.g., six feet) as a mitigation strategy.

Probable cases (i.e., no positive test result) and COVID-19 cases that have not impacted schools do not need to be reported using the CRT unless they are associated with an outbreak.

When someone tests positive for COVID-19, schools are not required to notify staff and parent(s)/legal guardian(s) of students. Positive cases are publicly reported [online](#).

When there is a suspected cluster of cases or outbreak, schools must notify all impacted staff and parent(s)/legal guardian(s) of students. A communications template is provided for this purpose.

To facilitate access to the most recent information, the hyperlink for all DOH documents goes to the landing page health.hawaii.gov/coronavirusdisease2019/resources/school-guidance/.

When reporting potential outbreaks of COVID-19 or influenza-like illness to the DOH Disease Reporting Line at 808-586-4586, the option number has been updated from 4 to 3.