



**Valley R-VI Schools**  
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Wednesday, January 5, 2022

**RE:** Changes to COVID-19 Procedures

Greetings,

Welcome to 2022. The month of December brought some changes occurring among some of the agencies on which we lean to get guidance when it comes to COVID-19 procedures. In early December, the Missouri Attorney General put out a letter to schools regarding quarantines and mandates. His office based this letter on a judgment in a Cole County, MO court case on Nov. 22, 2021, in which DHSS was named. In this letter, the Missouri Attorney General ordered all Missouri public schools and local health departments to cease issuing mask mandates, quarantine orders and other public health orders.

After receiving this letter, changes began to occur. Up until this point, whenever we would receive notice of a positive case in the school, the district handled the contact tracing for the Washington County Health Department (WCHD) and passed the information along to them. WCHD then issued the necessary quarantines. We have received notice from the WCHD that they are no longer issuing quarantines to close contacts of a positive.

Also, when it came to MSHSAA sanctioned school athletics and activities, MSHSAA had written guidelines for students to follow to be able to continue to participate or return to athletics and activities. As a school district, we adopted those guidelines and followed them for our students' participation. Shortly after the letter from the Missouri Attorney General was issued, MSHSAA put out a statement that they would no longer implement those requirements, and that it was up to each individual school to decide procedures with regard to close contacts moving forward.

Finally, on December 27, 2021, CDC put out new guidelines for quarantine procedures for a person with a positive case of COVID:

*Given what we currently know about COVID-19 and the Omicron variant, CDC is shortening the recommended time for isolation for the public. People with COVID-19 should isolate for 5 days and if they are asymptomatic or their symptoms are resolving (without fever for 24 hours), follow that by 5 days of wearing a mask when around others to minimize the risk of infecting people they encounter. The change is motivated by science demonstrating that the majority of SARS-CoV-2 transmission occurs early in the course of illness, generally in the 1-2 days prior to onset of symptoms and the 2-3 days after.*

Throughout this entire time of navigating the ever-changing landscape of COVID, our school district has leaned on health advice and guidance from our local health department and state & federal agencies. Therefore, the Valley R-VI School District feels it necessary to adjust our procedures in light of these changes that have transpired.

- Students that are considered a close contact will no longer be quarantined by a local health agency. However, based on CDC guidance, we are still recommending a five-day quarantine period for all close contacts, followed by a five-day masking upon return to school. The district will continue to contact trace when notified of a positive case and will now send home a letter with the child notifying the parents in lieu of a phone call so that they can still be aware and watch for symptoms. This change in notification procedures is based on the fact that the health department is no longer issuing mandated quarantines for close contacts. **If your family would still like a phone call from the school instead of a letter sent home with the child, please call 573-779-3515 and ask for Nurse Shelly.** Do this as soon as possible so we know you would prefer a phone call.

- Individuals with verified positive cases will now be quarantined by the local health department for five days, and thus should not be at school or school activities for that period of time. After the five-day quarantine, if they are asymptomatic or their symptoms are resolving (without fever for 24 hours), they are allowed to attend school but should wear a mask for the next five days (according to guidance from the CDC and the local health agency) when around others to minimize the risk of infecting others. MSHSAA is currently sticking to the ten-day quarantine period with a seven-day recovery period for student's testing positive for COVID. This is currently under evaluation and could possibly change with the new CDC guidance just issued.
- As we have always done, if a student is sick or symptomatic at school, we will contact a parent and ask that the student be taken home until he/she is well enough to return to school.
- If a student lives in a home with a positive case, the health department will strongly encourage the parent to monitor that student for symptoms and act accordingly if they become ill.
- If a student is a close contact of a confirmed positive case in the household, we still will allow them to stay at home for the 10 days from the last contact of the household positive case as recommended by DHSS and CDC. Students may still join classes via video or receive attendance through homebound. Check with your building principal for answers to questions about this.
- Starting January 10, 2022, we are moving to notification of a positive COVID-19 case to grade levels, buses, and athletic teams on our COVID dashboard found on our website. This is in lieu of sending notification letters home. This notification will be updated as we are notified of official positive cases. The COVID dashboard can be found on our website's home page at <[www.valleyschooldistrict.org](http://www.valleyschooldistrict.org)> as a link on the left side of the page. Please feel free to contact the building offices if you have questions regarding those cases.
- If desired, Binax rapid antigen tests are now available for use at school for Valley students and staff to be given by the school nurse or trained designee. If a student is symptomatic or has been identified as a contact, this can be requested by the parent. A parental permission form must be filled out and signed before a test can be administered. For more information on this, please contact Nurse Shelly at 573-779-3515.

We realize the frustration and confusion that has come with the COVID procedures changing so regularly. We have been frustrated and confused at times too. It seems every time we make changes and align our procedures with the most current recommendations and regulations, another change occurs, and we are scrambling to make more changes. Many of you may have questions or concerns. Just know that we want to help. We are seeing a shift in how COVID procedures are being handled, and as we have this entire time, we are trying to stay in line with the recommendations being passed down through the various agencies and to our local health department. We will continue to make changes as changes are made at these agencies. We will be reviewing our Safe Return to Continuity of Learning Plan soon and looking at current procedures in light of current recommendations, guidelines, laws and circumstances.

We realize this ongoing situation with COVID-19 is frustrating, and has led to confusion and a multitude of questions about how to proceed during this ongoing pandemic, in terms of preventative measures. We know that many of you may have questions and concerns, because we do, as well. We will be reviewing our Safe Return to Continuity of Learning Plan in order to address areas that might need to be revised following this court judgment and directive from the Attorney General, especially once we receive more guidance from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, our legal team, insurance provider, and others. Finally, we ask that our families continue to communicate with the Washington County Health Department and the families' healthcare providers regarding exposure and symptoms, and to not send your child to school if they are sick.

As always, we appreciate your patience and support as we continue to navigate through this situation.

Sincerely,

Michael Silvy, Ed.D.  
 Superintendent of Schools  
 Valley R-VI School District