

Governor Pritzker Issues Updated COVID-19 Executive Order

March 4 2022 5:00 PM



Executive Order Returns Schools to Normal Operating Procedures for Infectious Diseases

CHICAGO– With Illinois continuing to see vast improvement in recent weeks of COVID-19 hospitalizations and transmission, today Governor Pritzker released an updated executive order lifting the school exclusion requirements, shifting schools back to the ordinary processes for handling infectious diseases. The executive order was initially put in place to standardize CDC requirements for schools and alleviate the burden on overwhelmed local health departments from having to provide individualized recommendations. Now that the COVID-19 surge has subsided, schools and local health

departments can return to exercising their longstanding authority to address infectious disease cases among students and staff.

The CDC and IDPH continue to strongly recommend that students, teachers, and staff stay home when they have a confirmed case of COVID-19 or have signs of any infectious illness, including COVID-19. Schools should also continue to recommend that close contacts stay home and will continue to coordinate with their corresponding local health department to determine whether a close contact should stay home based on CDC guidance.

“As we move forward in our fight against COVID-19, schools should continue to look to their local health departments, IDPH and the CDC for guidance in dealing with this virus as they do for all communicable diseases,” **said Governor JB Pritzker**. “By getting vaccinated and staying home when sick or when deemed necessary by local health departments, school communities can help ensure their classrooms are a safe place for all.”

“We are at a stage in this pandemic where we have more tools than ever before to help prevent severe illness due to COVID-19, including safe and effective vaccines and new treatments,” **said IDPH Director Dr. Ngozi Ezike**. “With almost half of the entire Illinois population not only vaccinated, but boosted and up to date on their COVID-19 vaccines, as well as high levels of population immunity from both vaccination and infections, the risk of outbreaks causing severe illness is reduced. In-person learning is important for the social, emotional, and mental health of students, and schools should continue to work with their local health departments to assess risks and implement mitigations as needed to protect their students and staff.”

All schools continue to have long-standing authority under Illinois law to address confirmed, suspected, and contacts of infectious disease cases, including COVID-19. Just as they do with chickenpox, schools should send students with COVID-19 home.

CDC Guidance

The CDC recommends that everyone who has presumed or confirmed COVID-19 should stay home and isolate from other people for at least 5 full days (day 0 is the first day of symptoms or the date of the day of specimen collection for the positive viral test for asymptomatic persons). They should wear a mask when around others for an additional 5 days.

For close contacts: CDC guidance continues to recommend that individuals who are not up-to-date on COVID-19 vaccinations stay at home and quarantine for at least 5 days after exposure to COVID-19 and wear a mask until day 10.

The CDC recommends that close contacts who are up to date with their COVID-19 vaccines or who are within 90 days of a COVID-19 infection do not need to quarantine.

Vaccination Progress

This executive order has no impact on the State of Illinois' vaccination or testing requirements, which align with current CDC recommendations to screen unvaccinated school staff. Additionally, school districts and private businesses can continue to require masks at their discretion. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued revised guidance on February 25, 2022, to lift its recommendation for universal indoor masking, including in K-12 settings.

Illinois continues to lead the Midwest for school-aged vaccination rates. No state has a higher percentage of fully vaccinated 5–17-year-olds. Additionally, Illinois is home to the highest percentage of residents who have received a COVID-19 vaccine.

The State coordinated more than 2,000 mobile vaccination clinics at schools and other youth-centric locations, cumulatively providing nearly 75,000 vaccinations. Schools, organizations, and other groups wanting to host a vaccination clinic should file an application within the coming weeks at <https://dph.illinois.gov/covid19/vaccinationclinics.html>.

Vaccines continue to be readily available at pharmacies across the state, many local health departments, doctor offices, federally qualified health centers, and other locations. To find a COVID-19 vaccination location near you, go to www.vaccines.gov.