

GFPS Illness and Surveillance Protocols for 2022-2023 School Year

General Health and Wellness Promotion:

Health promotion and education are essential roles of the school nurse, as supported by the National Association of School Nurses' *Framework for 21st Century School Nursing Practice*. Under the principal public health/community health, the school nurse should work to find ways to support these two areas so that students may be healthy, safe, and ready to learn. The school nurse will work to promote health practices like hand hygiene, staying home when you are sick, and promoting vaccinations. The school nurse is also the health expert of the school who can work to share evidence-based education materials with students and staff, and assist with answering any health and wellness questions.

Illness assessment and exclusion:

The school nurse will use their assessment skills and critical thinking decision making when assessing a child who presents ill during the school day. The GFPS Nursing Department will rely on the guidance of the MTDPHHS Communicable Disease Guide along with other resources provided in this document. Nurses are encouraged to always use evidence-based practice in their decision making. Parents are, of course, an important part of this decision making process and nurses will work collaboratively with parents to educate them on illness trends, symptoms, home care and potential need for further evaluation.

General Exclusion Criteria:

From MT DPHHS Communicable Disease: A Guide for Schools in MT:

Exclusion Criteria for Children Who Are Ill:

"According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, when a child becomes ill but does not require immediate medical help, a determination must be made about whether the child should be sent home. Most illnesses do not require exclusion. The designated staff member should determine whether the child's illness meets the following criteria for exclusion:

- ***Prevents the child from participating comfortably in activities as determined by staff members of the early education/child care program or school.***
- ***Results in a need for care that is greater than staff members can provide without compromising the health and safety of other children.***

- **Poses a risk of spreading harmful disease to others, or is on the list of specific conditions requiring exclusion.**

If any of these criteria are met, the child should be excluded, regardless of the type of illness, unless a health professional determines the child's condition does not require exclusion."

Nurses will be encouraged to use the "Signs and Symptoms" chart along with the "Diseases A-Z" chart in the above mentioned guide to further assist with questions. The following guidance is provided within the department to support District health and wellness practices:

Symptom-based guidance:

Fever: Defined as a temperature greater than 100.4 degrees. May or may not present with other signs of illness. If a student presents with a fever and signs of illness or meets criteria above they should be sent home.

- May return after 24 hours fever free without the use of antipyretics.

Vomiting: The nurse may assess a student and determine if vomiting was episodic or has other cause than potential illness (i.e. exercise induced.) If vomiting is associated with other signs of illness (i.e. fever, diarrhea) or they have had more than 2 episodes within 24 hours, exclusion is recommended.

- May return after no emesis for 24 hours.

Diarrhea: One episode of diarrhea may not indicate severe illness in a student. If diarrhea continues and/or the student meets exclusion criteria above then the nurse may consider sending the student home. If a child is not potty trained and stool is not contained to their diapers then exclusion would be recommended until resolved. If a child is potty trained, but diarrhea is causing them to have accidents then it would be advisable to send them home.

*If there has been an identified "outbreak" or trend of GI illnesses suggestive of a communicable disease, such as Norovirus, then the nurse should consider exclusion and advising family of potential risk of infection.

- May return when diarrhea has resolved and child is feeling well.

Resource: Cleveland Clinic. "Should Your Child Stay Home Sick? Here is How to Decide," (October 2018). Retrieved August, 2022 from <https://health.clevelandclinic.org/should-your-child-stay-home-sick-heres-how-to-decide/>

General respiratory symptoms: There are many childhood illnesses and viruses that may present with coughing, runny nose, and general cold-like symptoms. The nurse may use their knowledge of potential illness trends in their school or community to work with the family and assess a student to the best of their ability. If the student meets general exclusion criteria the nurse will communicate with the family to help identify appropriate courses of action and return to school protocol. If the nurse has reason to believe symptoms could be related to a vaccine

preventable disease like Pertussis or COVID appropriate testing or referral should be made. (See COVID testing below).

COVID-19 symptoms: COVID-19 may present with a variety of symptoms, some included in the list above. If a student or staff member presents with symptoms that may be related to COVID-19, then the nurse can offer and/or highly recommend COVID testing. The GFPS District will no longer follow the previous “COVID-19 Illness Exclusion Criteria.” If a family/student/staff refuse testing then the nurse will determine inclusion criteria based on the general illness inclusion/exclusion criteria above. If an individual is a known close contact of someone testing positive for COVID-19 AND presents with symptoms, but refuses to test the nurse may consider them a “presumed positive” case and recommend COVID-19 isolation exclusion.

Recommendations for masking for ill/symptomatic individuals: GFPS does not have a universal masking policy for the 2022-2023 school year, but if a student presents with signs of a COVID-19 or another communicable disease spread through respiratory droplets it is advisable to ask that student to don a mask while in the health room or school building. If a student is unable to mask and presents with symptoms of COVID-19 they should be isolated from others as much as possible until able to go home, (CDC, 2022). It is recommended to ask parent permission or notify parents of masking when able to communicate with them. A GFPS school staff cannot require another individual to mask at this time, unless they are within their isolation period for a positive COVID-19 case.

General Practices for Illness Surveillance and Reporting of Communicable Disease

GFPS Nurses will continue to promote health and safety of schools through illness surveillance and monitoring in the following ways.

Tracking Illness Trends: GFPS Nurses should communicate with attendance secretaries/administrative assistants and request notification when a student is reported to have COVID, Influenza or other communicable diseases.

Communicating Exclusion/Inclusion Criteria: School nurses will follow up with families of reported students to ensure they understand proper criteria and timeframes for returning to school. Nurses will follow the requirements of reporting communicable diseases identified in ARM 37.114.203 to local health department officials. In addition, to support surveillance efforts school nurses will notify the local health department of illness trends of COVID, Influenza, and increased rates of GI illness to the local health department on weekly communication faxes, until determined otherwise.

Contact Tracing and Notification of Potential Close Contacts:

- COVID-19: The [CDC](#) no longer recommends that schools practice contact tracing for COVID-19 (COVID-19: Schools and Childcare Programs, 2022) . General notification of potential close contacts is recommended by the CDC and Cascade County Health Department. Nurses will work with administrators to determine appropriate messaging tools to notify parents as needed of potential exposure to someone testing positive for COVID-19. Blackboard calls or texts may be used or letters sent home.
 - [Isolation Guidelines](#): Per CDC guidance, individual testing positive should stay home and isolate from others for 5 days from onset of symptoms OR test date for asymptomatic individuals. If the individual has been fever free for 24 hours without the use of antipyretics AND have a general improvement in symptoms then they may return to work/school after completing the 5th day of isolation. The individual should wear a well fitting mask when around others for 10 full days after day zero (date of onset or test date).
 - Day 6-10 masking guidance: Administrators, school nurses, and teachers are not required to continually monitor masking compliance for individuals returning on day 6-10 of isolation. Nurses will communicate with families prior to the student's return to school regarding the importance of mask compliance and ask that they communicate with their student. Nurses may be utilized for support as needed and the nurse or administrator can communicate any concerns with the family. Any staff or student who is unable to comply with wearing a well-fitted mask during day 6-10 of their isolation period may be asked to stay home until fulfilling 10 days of isolation.
 - Student athletes: If a student athlete returns to school on day 6 following making recommendations, they may still be ineligible to return to sports if they are unable to wear their mask during participation. Families, administrators, nurses, trainers, and/or coaches may explore alternative options during this time.
 - [Quarantine Guidelines](#): No GFPS employee will inquire about an individual's COVID-19 vaccination status. Quarantine can also not be enforced in relation to COVID-19. If an individual has questions about Quarantining after an exposure to COVID-19 a school nurse may refer them to the [Quarantine/Isolation Calculator](#) on the CDC website or answer questions utilizing information provided by the CDC. School nurses may also encourage and offer frequent testing, mask wearing, and symptom checking for individuals with potential exposures.

Note: GFPS will no longer be offering "COVID Leave" and any leave due to isolation or quarantine will be taken out of an individual's sick leave.

- COVID-19 Surveillance and Identification of Clusters or Outbreaks: The GFPS Nursing department will continue to track COVID-19 activity within buildings and identify any trends or increases in case rates. If a nurse is concerned about an increase in trends or

identifies a cluster or outbreak as identified below they should consult their building admin and Lead Nurse.

- **Standardized K-12 school-associated classification:** “K-12 school-associated: COVID-19 case (confirmed or probable) who is a student, teacher, or staff member physically present in the school setting or participated in a school sanctioned extracurricular† activity
 - a. Within 14 days prior to illness onset or a positive test result OR
 - b. Within 10 days after illness onset or a positive test result Standardized K-12 school-transmission definition A subset of school-associated cases where the most likely place of exposure is determined to be the school setting or a school-sanctioned extracurricular activity,” (CSTE, 2021)
- **Standardized K-12 school-associated cluster description:** “Multiple cases comprising at least 10% of students, teachers, or staff within a specified core group* OR at least three (3) within a specified core group* meeting criteria for a school-associated COVID-19 case; with symptom onset or positive test result within 14 days of each other§ , AND NO likely known epidemiologic link to a case outside of the school setting.” (CSTE, 2021).
- Other Communicable Diseases: If there is another communicable disease reported within a school the nurse will work with a representative of the local health department to assist them to perform any contact tracing needed. The health department would be in charge of executing the recommended contact tracing and notifying any identified close contacts.

GFPS COVID Testing:

GFPS will continue to offer onsite rapid testing through the GFPS Nursing Department. Any student under the age of 18 must have consent from a parent/guardian prior to testing. All staff performing tests are required to document the test and subsequent results into Simple Report in a prompt and timely manner. This will in turn serve to cover the nurse’s obligation of reporting any confirmed positive tests to the local health department. Any positive cases reported to the nurse or tested onsite will be included in the weekly faxes to the health department.

References:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2022, March 30). *COVID-19; Quarantine and Isolation*. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/quarantine-isolation.html>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2022, August 11). *Operational Guidance K-12 Schools and Early Care and Educational Programs to Support Safe In-Person*

Learning. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-childcare-guidance.html>

Cleveland Clinic. (2018, October, 12). *Should Your Child Stay Home Sick? Here is How to Decide*. <https://health.clevelandclinic.org/should-your-child-stay-home-sick-heres-how-to-decide/>

Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE). (2021, August 6). *Standardized COVID-19 K-12 School Surveillance Guidance for Classification of Clusters and Outbreaks*. <https://preparedness.cste.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/CSTE-Standardized-COVID-19-K-12-School-Surveillance-Guidance-for-Classification-of-Clusters-and-Outbreaks.pdf>

Montana Department of Health and Human Resources. (2019, July). *Communicable Disease: A Guide for School in Montana*. https://dphhs.mt.gov/assets/publichealth/CDEpi/CDGuideforSchools2018_Final.pdf

National Association of School Nurses [NASN]. (2016). Framework for 21st century school nursing practice: National Association of School Nurses. *NASN School Nurse*, 31(1), 45-53. doi: 10.1177/1942602X15618644

Resources:

Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. (2014). *Infectious Disease Control Guide for School Staff*. <https://www.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/public/healthservices/pubdocs/infectiousdiseasecontrolguide.pdf>

[Vaccine information \(including booster recommendations\)](#)

[CDC Quarantine and Isolation Calculator](#)

[CDC COVID by County tool](#)

[Montana Response: COVID-19 website](#)

[CCHD COVID-19 web page](#)