

August 18, 2021

RE: Providing COVID-19 Case Information to Parents – Continuation of 2020-2021 Coordination

Directors of Schools:

As we begin the school year, it is our mutual goal to again have a safe, in-person environment and provide necessary information to parents to facilitate healthcare decisions. Schools are critical partners with local health departments to coordinate close contact notification(s) when COVID-19 cases are identified. This partnership is important both for keeping children in school and for the health of families and communities.

The U.S. Department of Education requires districts to submit *Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plans* to the Tennessee Department of Education that address key school health and safety policies and strategies. These plans are due by **August 27, 2021**. To clarify some of the instructions with respect to the Plans, please note:

- Plans must explicitly address every bullet point in Question 5 regarding district policies and strategies.
- Local health departments must be included in stakeholder consultation regarding the Plan.
- Plans must explain the schools'/districts' role in contact tracing. When cases are identified, schools are expected to supply a list of identified close contacts, seating charts and rosters to the extent those documents are maintained (for bus, classroom, lunchroom, or athletics settings, as applicable) and parental contact information to health departments.
- When this information is provided by districts, health departments are responsible for contact tracing, notifying close contacts and providing quarantine and isolation protocols to those families.
- Plans require local board approval and public posting.

Many schools share directory information with their local health department, which has helped enable time-sensitive notifications. Health departments are legally obligated to maintain the confidentiality of personal health information.

As with contact tracing, school policies supporting quarantine recommendations that comply with state guidelines is essential. Further, no person with COVID-19 should physically be in school for 10 days from the earlier of (i) symptom onset or (ii) date of test.

Again, your dedication to the educational achievement and health of our students and families is deeply appreciated.

Sincerely,



Lisa Piercey, MD, MBA, FAAP
Commissioner



Penny Schwinn, PhD, MAT
Commissioner



Quarantine and isolation guidance from the Tennessee Department of Health can be found here:

<https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/health/documents/cedep/novel-coronavirus/Isolation-QuarantineRelease.pdf>

Parent information for what to expect when COVID-19 has been identified in schools or if their children are identified as a contact can be found here: <https://www.tn.gov/health/cedep/ncov/educational-resources.html>

Additional resources, including CDC Guidance for Preventing COVID-19 in Schools, TDH Return to School Algorithm, TDH Protocol for Schools Assisting Public Health with Close Contact Identification for COVID-19, and County-level COVID-19 data can be found here: https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/health/documents/cedep/novel-coronavirus/TDH_COVID-19_Educational_Resources.pdf