

SPS COVID PROTOCOLS

Updated: March 28, 2022

Please note: As of December 29, 2021, MDPH has adopted the updated CDC [guidelines for isolation](#) (5 days instead of 10) with strict mask use for the remaining 5 days.

COVID TESTING

Under what circumstances will rapid tests be given to students at school?

Any student who is symptomatic should be rapid tested in the nurse's office. When a pool test result is positive, students in the pool will receive a BinaxNOW rapid antigen test, also called a "reflex test."

Under what circumstances will rapid tests be given to staff at school?

Any staff who is symptomatic, regardless of vaccination status, can be rapid tested in the nurse's office. When a pool test result is positive, staff in the pool will receive a rapid antigen test, also called a "reflex test."

If a student tests positive outside of school, does that get reported as a COVID case? To whom?

If a family reports a positive test, the school nurse is notified. The case is added to the weekly report the principal sends home to families and staff. All community tests (except at-home rapid tests) are automatically reported to the Massachusetts DPH. The Somerville Health Department is notified of all cases with a Somerville address. All positives, from internal and external testing sources, are reported in the [SPS COVID dashboard](#).

What's the procedure for when a student or staff member misses surveillance testing day?

Any asymptomatic student or staff member who misses testing should test the following week.

What happens when test results are not returned from the Broad Institute lab within 24 hours?

On average, 95%+ of SPS pool tests are returned from the lab within 24 hours. This percentage is tracked and reported on the public dashboard. If there are lab delays affecting a particular school, the district testing team immediately notifies the principal. The district team also notifies anyone in a positive pool or pool that is not properly processed .

What's the procedure for when a student or staff member is out with COVID symptoms, but doesn't get a test independently?

At-home COVID-19 test kits are provided to all families. The policy is for a student to either test negative, have a doctor's note indicating an alternate diagnosis and have resolution of symptoms, including being fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications. Occasionally, if a parent has been unable to test a child who has been absent with COVID-like symptoms, a school nurse or CIC staff may rapid test the child before school re-entry. Symptomatic staff should follow the same guidelines.

CONTACT TRACING

Who does contact tracing?

Per DESE, SPS no longer performs contact tracing. State and local analysis indicate that the overwhelming majority of school close contacts placed into Test & Stay (daily rapid testing following exposure) remained negative. However, the city contact tracers continue to follow-up with all confirmed cases, including cases identified through school testing.

What should staff do if they find out about a positive case in a student's family?

Please inform the school nurse. All community tests (except at-home rapid tests) are automatically reported to the Massachusetts DPH and those results are then accessible to the Health Department in the town of residence for follow-up. The Somerville Health Dept is notified of all confirmed cases with a Somerville address.

If a family member tests positive, do students or educators quarantine?

If fully vaccinated and asymptomatic, they do not need to quarantine, but do need to wear a mask for 10 days post-exposure. If not fully vaccinated, they need to quarantine for 5 days and wear a mask for another 5 days upon returning to school. In all instances, it is recommended that the individual test themselves 5 days after last exposure.

How are close contacts determined?

Close contacts are determined by the city contact tracers based on family reporting.

COMMUNICATION

Do positives get shared with the school community? If so, when?

If an individual tests positive during reflex or symptomatic testing at school, the teacher will be notified that day. If someone tests positive outside school, the nurse will provide information to the appropriate people after determining whether there were close contacts and the timing of symptoms/positive test and risk of exposure/transmission. The school community will receive one communication at the end of the week providing the total number of positive cases in school that week. We recommend that schools report both internal and external cases separately.

How else can I protect myself and my students?

- Maintain social distancing: 3 feet in the classroom and 6 feet in other situations when possible
- Avoid situations where you are closer than 6 feet and unmasked (ie: do not share meals with others)
- Test yourself or obtain testing if you have symptoms. Even minor symptoms such as runny nose, sore throat, or headache may be signs of COVID-19.

- Wear a well-fitting mask. Unvaccinated or partially vaccinated should wear a KN95 or similar high quality mask at school.
- Ensure students wash hands before and after eating or recess time; utilize hand sanitizer when hand washing is not possible.

Where can I find more information?

[COVID Testing and Dashboard](#)

[COVID Policies for SPS Staff](#)

[COVID Policies for SPS Students](#)

Have other general questions that should be included in this FAQ?

Please email jcurley2@k12.somerville.ma.us.