

Email from Frank Edelblut, NH Commissioner of Education
Received Thursday, March 18, 2021
Re: Updated Educational Setting Quarantine Guidance

Dear School Leaders,

I wanted to bring to your attention a Health Alert Network #38 that was published by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) late yesterday. The content of this HAN modifies, among other things, quarantine guidance in an educational setting. The content of this HAN was reviewed by DHHS in yesterday's school call that was attended by many of you and your school nurses.

Please consider how this updated guidance relates to your own COVID-19 operating guidance and any updates that may be required.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Educational Setting Quarantine Guidance Change:

- Under the Governor's Executive Order #85, all NH schools must now offer in-person learning at least 2 days per week.
- All schools must still follow the current NH Grades K-12 Back-to-School Guidance.
 - New Hampshire allows for a minimum of 3 feet of physical distancing between students in the classroom with a recommendation to maximize physical distancing to the extent possible
 - Face mask use continues to be strongly recommended in all educational settings (including classrooms), especially if students are seated within 3-6 feet of each other
 - When face masks are taken off (e.g., when eating lunch), students and staff should be spaced at least 6 feet apart
 - If wind instruments and singing are involved in a classroom activity, the NH arts & music education guidance still applies, and students and staff should be separated by the recommended 8-10 feet of physical distance
- Emerging evidence during the COVID-19 pandemic (see CDC Science Brief and NH DPHS Considerations for Transitioning Between School Instructional Models), and NH's experience with contact tracing in schools, continues to show schools are low-risk for spreading COVID-19.
- A new study published in the journal *Clinical Infectious Diseases* is the first to show that in the setting of universal face mask use in classrooms, COVID-19 infection rates were equivalent for schools that implemented either a minimum of 3 feet or 6 feet of physical distancing.

- Therefore, NH DPHS will not recommend quarantine for students or staff if a COVID-19 exposure occurs in the classroom setting where students and staff are seated and spaced at least 3 feet apart with consistent and correct face mask use. o This guidance applies only to controlled and monitored educational classroom settings (including K-12 schools, colleges, and universities)
 - o In other settings, NH DPHS will continue to recommend quarantine for persons within 6 feet of someone with COVID-19 for a cumulative time of 10 minutes or longer during the person's infectious period, regardless of mask use.

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