

# Review of DESE-DPH Protocols/Testing Guidance (8-11-31 and 8-13-21 Memos)

What is being recommended?  
What does this mean for  
Brookline?

# Symptomatic testing recommendations—DESE/DPH 8-13-21

## COVID-19 symptoms list:

- **Fever (100.0° Fahrenheit or higher), chills, or shaking chills**
- **Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath**
- **New loss of taste or smell**
- **Muscle aches or body aches**
- Cough (not due to other known cause, such as chronic cough)
- Sore throat, *when in combination with other symptoms*
- Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea *when in combination with other symptoms*
- Headache *when in combination with other symptoms*
- Fatigue, *when in combination with other symptoms*
- Nasal congestion or runny nose (not due to other known causes, such as allergies) *when in combination with other symptoms*

--Unvaccinated individuals and any close contacts presenting these symptoms should follow testing and quarantine response protocols

--Vaccinated individuals who are not close contacts should follow the testing and quarantine response protocols if they are experiencing **symptoms in bold**. These individuals may also seek clinical guidance to assess the need for PCR testing if they have other symptoms on this list.

# PSB questions: Symptomatic testing recommendations—DESE/DPH 8-13-21

## COVID-19 symptoms list:

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1. What if vaccinated person has Sx that aren't in bold? Should they be allowed in school without COVID testing? (breakthrough infection with delta variant → minimal Sx)

2. What about isolated sore throat or runny nose/congestion? (would require testing if hospital employee, regardless of vaccination status)

Unvaccinated individuals and any close contacts presenting these symptoms should follow testing and quarantine response protocols

Vaccinated individuals who are not close contacts should follow the testing and quarantine response protocols if they are experiencing **symptoms in bold**. These individuals may also seek clinical guidance to assess the need for PCR testing if they have other symptoms on this list.

# PSB symptomatic testing recommendations (subject to change)

**Anyone with the following symptoms, vaccinated or not, should be tested to rule out COVID-19**  
*(Note: school nurse/primary care doctor discretion will factor into decision-making in individual cases):*

- Fever (100.0° Fahrenheit or higher), chills, or shaking chills
- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- New loss of taste or smell
- Muscle aches or body aches
- Cough (not due to other known cause, such as chronic cough)
- Sore throat, *? when in combination with other symptoms (TBD)*
- Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea
- Headache *when in combination with other symptoms*
- Fatigue, *when in combination with other symptoms*
- Nasal congestion or runny nose (not due to other known causes, such as allergies), *? when in combination with other symptoms (TBD)*

If symptoms develop at home, must test before returning to school (PCR recommended)

If symptoms develop at school.....

## DESE/DPH BinaxNOW program: Testing of mildly symptomatic people who develop symptoms while in school (to be implemented by PSB—subject to change)

- \*\*\*Students/staff who develop symptoms (prior slide) at home should NOT RETURN TO SCHOOL UNTIL THEY HAVE TESTED NEGATIVE FOR COVID-19 (and symptoms have improved)
- **Students/staff who develop symptoms while in school can be tested with BinaxNOW (rapid antigen test) in school nurse's office**
  - **Nurse will inform parent/guardians of symptoms and rapid test results**
  - If positive, home for isolation
  - If negative and mild symptoms, can go back to class at nurse's discretion
    - If the minimal symptom(s) persist, the individual may be re-tested within the subsequent 3 days. If symptoms worsen, the individual should stay home and seek medical care and be evaluated for the need for PCR testing
  - If negative and significant symptoms (top 4 on list), go home and get PCR testing before returning to school

# DESE/DPH isolation rules for COVID-19 cases (to be followed by PSB—no change from last year)

- **Duration:** Self-isolation for COVID-19 positive cases is a minimum of 10 days after symptom onset or after positive PCR or antigen test, if asymptomatic.
- **Return to school:** After 10 days and once they have:
  - Been without fever for 24 hours (and without taking fever-reducing medications); and
  - Experienced improvement in other symptoms; and
  - Individuals who do not meet these criteria after 10 days may receive clearance from either public health authority contact tracers (the local board of health or Community Tracing Collaborative) or school health professional before returning to school.
- **Note:** Return to school should be based on time and symptom resolution. **Repeat testing prior to return is not recommended.**

# DESE/DPH definition of in-school close contact (8-13-21 memo)

- Close contacts are defined as individuals who have been within 6 feet of a COVID-19 positive individual while indoors, for at least 15 minutes during a 24-hour period
- **The following close contacts are exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols\*:**
  - **Asymptomatic, fully vaccinated close contacts:** Individuals who are **asymptomatic and fully vaccinated** are exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols.
  - **Classroom close contacts:** An individual who is exposed to a COVID-19 positive individual in the classroom **while both individuals were masked, so long as the individuals were spaced at least 3 feet apart**, is exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols.
  - **Bus close contacts:** Individuals on buses must be masked according to federal requirements. As such, individuals who are masked on buses when windows are open are exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols.
  - **Close contacts who have had COVID-19 within the past 90 days**

\*PSB will likely notify close contacts who are on the exemption list, but not require testing or quarantine

# New DESE/DPH Test and Stay Program for close contacts (to be implemented by PSB)

- Fully vaccinated people are exempt from close contact testing/quarantine protocols if they remain ASx
  - If develop symptoms, must stay home and get tested
- **Test and Stay protocol:** data<sup>1</sup> suggests protocol is generally equivalent to quarantine for school-based contacts, and is a safe alternative to at-home isolation
- Goal: keep kids learning in person, in school

1) Bernadette C Young, David W Eyre, Saroj Kendrick, Chris White, Sylvester Smith, et. al. "A cluster randomized trial of the impact of a policy of daily testing for contacts of COVID-19 cases on attendance and COVID-19 transmission in English secondary schools and colleges." (July 2021). medRxiv. Available at: <https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2021.07.23.21260992v1>

# New DESE/DPH Test and Stay Program for close contacts, continued (to be implemented by PSB)

**Duration of Test and Stay:** 7 days from the date of exposure (last date of exposure)

• **Return to School:** Close contacts can remain in school and do not have to quarantine, as long as they:

- Are asymptomatic
- Wear masks in school at all times, other than when eating or drinking. When these individuals cannot be masked (i.e., when eating or drinking) they should maintain 3 feet of distance from other individuals to the extent feasible.
- Take a rapid antigen test (e.g., BinaxNOW) on each school day and receive a negative result. When the 7 days from date of exposure includes weekends or holidays, individuals should quarantine on weekends, and if they remain asymptomatic, upon return to school be tested immediately. If the individual remains negative, they can stay in school.
- Conduct active monitoring for symptoms through day 14, and self-isolate at home if symptoms develop.

# Clarifications needed—Test and Stay Program

“Individuals who are part of the Test and Stay protocols may be eligible to participate in school sports and extracurricular activities, provided that they are in compliance with the applicable protocol. For events and sports that take place on non-school days, testing will still be required on those days to participate.”

We are not going to offer testing on weekends for e.g. school sports event....

\*\*Would be ideal if anyone participating in school sports/extracurricular activities was vaccinated—and thus exempt from contact testing protocol

“As part of Test and Stay, quarantine is still strongly recommended for individuals outside of school settings.”

What does this mean? (Presumably, don't go to **non-school-based** extracurricular activity? Will be up to parent/guardian to notify the outside activity group.)

# Asymptomatic screening testing: DESE/DPH program offerings and recommendations (Aug 11, 2021 memo)

- Not recommending inclusion of vaccinated individuals
- Umbrella consent form to be provided prior to school start—[consent to cover all possible types of testing, for maximum flexibility](#)
  - [In-school BinaxNOW testing \(symptomatic individuals, Test and Stay program\) AND asymptomatic screening testing \(in case it is needed\)](#)
- 3 options:
  - A. last year's pooled testing strategy (pooled AN swab, with positive pools requiring collection of new AN swab from each person for BinaxNOW testing)
  - B. Dual AN swab pooled testing (each person submits TWO AN swabs; one is pooled. If pool positive, **lab** tests the other swabs from those in that pool).
  - C. saliva pooled testing (saliva collected at home); lab does pooling and deconvolution from original sample
- Funding available for testing coordinator, sample collection, courier, testing itself
  - Still confirming exactly what State program support will look like
- Will still require substantial participation of PSB nursing team
- Option A is familiar to PSB team; Option B likely similar (? easier); C totally new process for community

# Do we **need** to do ASx screening testing?

- PSB data from 2020-2021 indicates that in-school transmission from cases to contacts (secondary attack rate, or “SAR”) is very infrequent
- We have not thought of ASx screening testing as a requirement for school safety—rather, as evidence that mitigation measures are working
- Last year’s yield of ASx pooled testing was extremely low
- If we aren’t seeing in-school transmission from known cases, there isn’t much yield in hunting for unknown ASx cases—and it’s a lot of work
- However, impact of delta variant on the above is not yet clear
- Suggestion: continue to monitor for in-school transmission. If observed rate rises above last year’s rate, implement ASx screening testing in unvaccinated populations