

Common Questions and Answers about Schools and COVID-19

Quarantine Alternative Pilot

What are the details of quarantine alternative pilot?

Specific details of the pilot are being finalized. The ODH Quarantine Alternative Pilot provides an alternative to at-home quarantine for students who are direct contacts of a positive case. This pilot uses mask wearing and frequent testing to keep healthy students in school and keep sick students at home. The details are still in development, and therefore, the pilot has not yet started. The pilot is being conducted in conjunction with the Warren County Combined Health District and 10 school districts in Warren, Butler and Clinton counties. Families can choose to opt into the program only in the districts participating in the pilot.

If the early experience is positive with this pilot, we may consider expanding this opportunity statewide to schools and local health departments who feel this alternative is appropriate for their district and community.

How can my school participate?

The pilot is currently limited to the 10 school districts already enrolled.

When will we see data?

The pilot has not yet started, and as such, we do not have an anticipated date that data will be available.

Mask Mandate

If we move to a temporary mask mandate, how do we know when it is appropriate to do away with the policy?

There is no hard-and-fast rule on how many cases we see. Monitoring the state, and our local communities, for case spread of COVID-19, and increasing vaccination rates, will point us in the right direction. Currently, the CDC advises masking in indoor areas of “substantial” or “high” transmission, as updated daily at <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view>. Seeing these transmission rates in the moderate or low categories will be a positive step.

Bus Drivers

We are starting to see some bus driver shortages. In some states, the National Guard is driving buses. Is that a possibility in Ohio?

This is an option we are exploring with the Ohio National Guard. Local solutions are possibly available, as well. We are committed to working with school leaders to address this potential issue.

Children and COVID-19

Is there any information on why other respiratory illnesses are higher than normal?

It is unknown why RSV and other respiratory viruses are as high as they are at this time. That said, according to the CDC, cases of RSV and other respiratory illnesses began to increase in April 2021, as people began to ease up on COVID-19 precautions. Now, as people are unmasked and coming back into contact with pathogens that have existed, but weren't spreading much, throughout the pandemic.

If we have wide-spread masking, will high volumes of other respiratory illnesses reappear when we stop masking?

Wearing masks helped to significantly reduce the spread of other illnesses last year – like flu and RSV – and it can be assumed that when we drop that added layer of protection, just like if we all chose not to get a flu shot, we would have a higher risk of contracting respiratory illnesses.

Given the state of our overwhelmed health system, what efforts are occurring to expedite the FDA EUA for the vaccine for ages 5 to 11? When will those vaccines be available?

Recent reports indicate that vaccines could be available for children ages 5-11 by Halloween.

If we have a mask requirement but continue to have students who test positive for COVID-19, do you recommend us continuing to have in-person school or should we remove to remote learning?

It is important to keep kids in school, in-person, learning as much as possible. A mask mandate in your school is one of the three pathways that we have already laid out [that allow students and staff to avoid quarantine](#). While some students may continue to be exposed out of the classroom, and later test positive, masking in the classroom can prevent further widespread quarantine and allow as many students as possible to experience the benefits of in-person learning.