

January 10, 2022

Dear Parents, Guardians, and Teachers:

The Larimer County Department of Health and Environment (LCDHE) has requested that your school district forward this message to you.

In the past few weeks Colorado has seen a dramatic rise in COVID-19 cases due to the highly infectious Omicron variant. LCDHE expects cases in our community to continue to rise in the coming weeks. We anticipate that exposure to COVID-19 positive individuals in our community- including school and childcare settings- will become more routine. With a dramatic increase of cases like we are seeing, it is important to practice prevention and mitigation strategies as outlined below.

Please know that both our Larimer County and facility teams are working hard to provide quarantine and isolation guidance to affected individuals in our community. **However, due to the high volume of cases and state wide delays in reporting, you or your child may not receive a notice of quarantine for every routine classroom or school exposure, including lunchtime exposures.** LCDHE will prioritize contact tracing and exposure investigation efforts for high risk settings. Although quarantines are not anticipated for routine classroom exposures where social distancing and masking are closely observed, LCDHE may quarantine cohorts where high spread is observed or anticipated.

LCDHE is working to notify cases with important isolation information as soon as possible. Please note that due to state wide delays in reporting, LCDHE may learn of your child's positive test several days after you receive your results. **Do not wait for public health to contact you with a notice of isolation.** Begin following [isolation guidelines](#) as soon as you or your child become ill or test positive.

If you or your child have tested positive or were identified as being exposed, you may be contacted with important public health information by text (970-999-1770) or email (larimerhealthfollowup@larimer.org). Ensure that both your testing provider and your school or childcare have an up to date phone number on file to facilitate receiving this information. If your phone cannot receive text messages, LCDHE may attempt to contact you by phone call, email, or mail.

LCDHE is asking parents and guardians to help keep our schools and community healthy. School districts have been asked to implement the following policies to help reduce the spread of the highly contagious Omicron variant and help maintain in person learning.

- All staff and students who have **tested positive for COVID-19**, regardless of vaccination status, should complete the required [isolation period](#). If staff or students cannot reliably wear a well fitting mask for 5 additional days (days 6-10) after completing their 5 day isolation period, they must remain home for the entire 10 day period.
- **All symptomatic staff and students must remain home** until existing illness policy requirements have been met. Staff and students should strongly consider testing and/or consulting with a health care provider to obtain an alternate diagnosis before returning to school/work.
- All staff or students who are unvaccinated or not up to date on vaccinations who have had contact with a **positive household member** must remain home and [quarantine](#). If staff or students cannot reliably wear a well fitting mask for 5 additional days (days 6-10) after completing their 5 day quarantine period, they must remain home for the entire 10 day period.
- LCDHE [strongly recommends](#) that students or staff who are unvaccinated or not up to date on vaccinations who have had contact with a **presumed positive (symptomatic with no positive test or alternate diagnosis) household member** remain home and [quarantine](#).
- All staff or students who have been exposed to a positive or presumed positive individual and are **up to date on COVID-19 vaccinations** or have tested positive for COVID-19 (on a [viral test](#)) in the 90 days before their exposure may choose to quarantine but are not required to. These individuals must wear a well fitting mask for 10 days following the exposure and should consider testing on day 5 after exposure.
- In accordance with our [local public health order](#), except as specifically exempted, each person ages 3+ in Larimer County must wear a face covering whenever entering or within any Public Indoor Space, including schools and childcares. LCDHE recommends (but does not require) use of [well fitting](#) surgical, KN95, KF94, or FFP2 type masks over cloth masks for increased protection. This is especially important for high risk or unvaccinated individuals.

We know that the increase of cases is frustrating. Here are some steps you can take to protect yourself, your student, and your household.

- **Get vaccinated.** Stay up to date on your [COVID-19 vaccine](#), including getting boosters when eligible. Vaccination remains the most effective tool available to protect against severe illness.
- **Reduce your risk of additional exposure.** Reduce the number of exposures that you and members of your household have to others outside of school, especially if you or your loved one is unvaccinated. Avoid large gatherings when possible. Consider testing before and after large gatherings. If large gatherings cannot be avoided, do your best to meet outdoors and/or increase ventilation or filtration options, wear well fitting face coverings, and practice social distancing.
- **Protect vulnerable household members.** If you live or visit with any one over the age of 65 or with underlying health conditions, consider limiting the amount of interactions you and they have with unvaccinated people and individuals who are symptomatic with

no negative test or alternate diagnosis. Avoid contact with vulnerable household members when you have been exposed or are feeling sick.

- **Consult with your healthcare provider.** If you are concerned that you or your child may be at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19, consult your health care provider to learn additional steps you can take to protect yourself.

In-person learning continues to be an important part of our children's well-being, and provides support to working parents. LCDHE is working closely with our local schools and childcares keep these facilities open. We thank you in taking the following actions to keep our children in school and childcares:

- Getting vaccinated and boosted
- Staying home when sick
- Reducing unnecessary exposures for the time being

We know this is a lot of information. The Larimer County Health Department's team is available to answer questions and clarify this information further. Parents may call them with questions at 970-498-5500, text us at 970-999-1770, or email larimerhealthfollowup@larimer.org.

Thank you for keeping our community safe.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas R. Gonzales". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Tom Gonzales, MPH, REHS
Larimer County Public Health Director