DEP RIVENT OF HEAT

Rhode Island Department of Health

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www.health.ri.gov

Memo

To: Pre K-12 Schools and District Leaders

From: Center for COVID-19 Epidemiology (CCE)

Date: August 24, 2023

Subject: Back to School COVID-19 Reminders and Updates

Dear School and District Leaders,

We hope you have had an enjoyable summer!

In preparation for the 2023-24 school year, RIDOH expects increases in COVID-19 this fall and winter season. Centers for Disease Prevention and Control's (CDC) **COVID-19 guidance for schools remains largely the same.** The goal remains to prevent students and staff from getting very sick from COVID-19 and to minimize disruptions to school and families.

RIDOH encourages you to review the following COVID-19 information and updates:

COVID-19 Key Recommendations

Students and staff should continue to take preventive actions to avoid getting very sick and/or spreading COVID-19 including

- Staying up to date with COVID-19 vaccine;
- Staying home when sick and getting tested when you have <u>COVID-19 symptoms</u>;
- If <u>exposed</u> to someone with COVID-19, monitoring symptoms; testing after day 5; and wearing a mask through day 10;
- If you have COVID-19, isolating at home for 5 days and wearing a mask through day 10;
- If at higher risk of getting very sick, have a COVID-19 plan.

Schools and districts are encouraged to

- Review CDC's operational guidance for K-12 schools; and
- Monitor COVID-19 trends, such as hospital admission levels (HALs), in Rhode Island on <u>RIDOH's Data Hub</u> to stay informed about when to consider additional <u>steps to reduce the spread</u> of COVID-19.
 - o Additional steps are recommended when HALs are medium or high.

COVID-19 Operational Updates

<u>Testing</u> remains an important tool to detect infection and prevent COVID-19 spread. With the expiration of federal and state COVID-19 test kit distribution programs, schools and districts may choose to purchase tests to encourage and support access to testing for both students and staff.

- Rhode Island Department of Administration (DOA) approved a Master Price Agreement for COVID-19 test kits (MPA #611) that allows for schools to procure both rapid antigen test kits and PCR tests. Find detailed information on the Contract Board. including an Agency User Guide. If you have any questions, please email the assigned Rhode Island Department of Purchasing representative at David.Francis@purchasing.ri.gov.
- COVID-19 remains a reportable illness at both federal and state levels. Schools should continue to report COVID-19 outbreaks to RIDOH. An outbreak is defined as 5 or more cases *OR* 20% of a core group (i.e., same class, sports team, office) within a 7-day period. RIDOH has developed a simplified, online Outbreak Reporting Form for schools to use starting in the fall. The form aims to reduce administrative and time burden on schools while leveraging technology for effective COVID-19 surveillance. We'll share more information once the online reporting form link is live.

Districts and schools are encouraged to share the updated Pre K-12 School COVID-19 Resource Guide with staff and use the materials for your outreach and communication with students and families. [English][Spanish][Portuguese]

Please feel free to contact us for any questions or support needs at RIDOH.COVID19Questions@health.ri.gov

Thank you for your support and cooperation,

CCE Education Team