



COVID-19 Considerations for Reopening Schools

February 9, 2021

Operating Schools After Vaccination

In January and February 2021, Kentucky's educators will have the opportunity to receive vaccinations against the COVID-19 virus. This document provides guidance and considerations for school operations after vaccinations have been distributed.

Considerations for In-Person Schooling

While widespread vaccination is likely to expedite the return to normalcy, the exponential spread of the COVID-19 virus and new variants will remain a threat to communities for many months. Even after fully vaccinating faculty and staff, schools must carefully consider the way they operate in-person schooling.

The vaccination against COVID-19 prevents severe illness but does not prevent against infection or limit the ability of an individual to spread the disease. Students currently are ineligible to receive the vaccination as it has not been approved for use in children, and remain at risk for COVID-19. Infected students also may spread COVID-19 to family members who have not yet been vaccinated, leading to increased community spread.

Due to this, and pursuant to [Executive Order No. 2020-1041](#) (EO 2020-1041), all schools must continue to follow the five Safety Expectations outlined in the [Guidance on Safety Expectations and Best Practices for Kentucky Schools, updated Dec. 7, 2020](#), including those regarding:

- Social distancing;
- Cloth face coverings, school health policies and personal protective equipment;
- Screening and school exclusion;
- Sanitation and environmental factors; and
- Contact tracing.

Schools also are encouraged to continue to use the [COVID-19 Daily Case Incidence Rate Maps](#) and follow the guidance outlined in the [COVID-19 Mode of Instruction Metrics for K-12 Education](#) to determine if in-person schooling is appropriate for their communities. Regardless of the mode of instruction selected, schools are required to offer a fully virtual option for any student who requests it ([EO 2020-1041](#)). Resources for designing quality virtual instruction can be found on the [KDE's COVID-19 Reopening Resources](#) webpage.

Considerations for Remote Work

Pursuant to [EO 2020-1041](#), school districts must provide an alternative or virtual work assignment to any employee who requests accommodation and meets the following criteria for a high risk individual developed by the Food and Drug Administration:



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- Has a body mass index (BMI) greater than or equal to 35;
- Has chronic kidney disease;
- Has diabetes;
- Has immunosuppressive disease;
- Is currently receiving immunosuppressive treatment;
- Is equal to or greater than 65 years of age; OR
- Is equal to or greater than 55 years of age AND has
 - Cardiovascular disease,
 - Hypertension, or
 - Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease/other chronic respiratory disease.

The requirement to offer accommodations extends until the eligible employee is at least seven calendar days past the final dose of the complete vaccination series for the applicable vaccine. Districts are not required to extend accommodations to employees who refuse to take the vaccine.

Quarantine Procedures

Districts should continue to maintain strict quarantine procedures even after the faculty and staff have been fully vaccinated against the COVID-19 virus. As has been stated, the vaccination against COVID-19 prevents severe illness but does not prevent against infection or limit the ability for an individual to spread disease. As such, the U.S. [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) recommends that vaccinated individuals continue to follow established quarantine protocols after an exposure to someone with COVID-19. The CDC recommends a 14-day quarantine. In instances when a 14-day quarantine is not possible, the CDC recommends the following two alternative models:

- Quarantine can end after day 10 without testing and if no symptoms have been reported during daily monitoring. With this strategy, residual post-quarantine transmission risk is estimated to be about 1% with an upper limit of about 10%.
- Quarantine can end after day 7 if the quarantined individual tests negative and if no symptoms were reported during daily monitoring. The testing sample may be collected and tested within 48 hours before the end of the scheduled quarantine period, but quarantine cannot be discontinued earlier than day 8. With this strategy, the residual post-quarantine transmission risk is estimated to be about 5% with an upper limit of about 12%.

Post-Vaccination Scenarios

- A teacher who has had their first vaccination shot is exposed to COVID-19 while visiting with family.



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- Since the teacher has only received the first vaccination shot, the CDC recommends that the teacher continues to follow existing quarantine protocols.
- A teacher who has had both vaccination shots is exposed to COVID-19 while traveling for spring break.
 - While the COVID-19 vaccination prevents severe illness, it does not prevent against infection or limit the spread of COVID-19 to others. As such, the CDC recommends that the teacher continues to follow existing quarantine protocols.
- A student tests positive for COVID-19 after the faculty have been fully vaccinated.
 - The COVID-19 vaccination has not been approved for use on children. The school should continue to follow existing protocols for student contact tracing and quarantine.