



Okaloosa County School District COVID-19 Information for Parents 2021-2022 School Year



Student health and safety continues to be a top priority as we return to more normal school operations.

Student health and safety includes not only physical health and safety, but also academic health, mental health, and social-emotional well-being. A recent survey of school districts across the country found that 74% reported multiple indicators of increased mental health stresses among students during the pandemic. In Okaloosa County, we have also seen learning loss among students who have been disconnected from school the past sixteen months.

Being in school is critical for the overall well-being of our students. Our plans for this year strike a sensible balance that emphasizes your student's success at school while also being mindful of the steps we need to take to keep our school environments safe.

Teachers, administrators, and support staff have been preparing this summer for a return to more normal school operations. The first day of school is August 10th, and we are excited to welcome our students back! We will retain critical practices that were established last year to keep our schools clean and sanitized.

Below are answers to questions that parents have asked this summer and will help you plan for the upcoming school year. Families may contact their child's school if they have additional questions or visit our website (www.okaloosaschools.com) throughout the school year for up-to-date information regarding COVID-19.

1. Are there currently any Emergency Orders in Florida or in Okaloosa County involving schools and COVID-19?

No.

2. What safety measures will be in place to start the school year?

- Hand sanitizer will be available in every classroom, on school buses, and in other common areas.
- Each classroom will be provided disinfectant wipes.
- Daily cleaning and disinfecting protocols will be in place in schools and on buses.
- Masks will be optional in schools and on buses. Schools and buses will have a supply of masks available.
- Signs will be displayed to remind those in schools about social distancing and the use of hand sanitizer/washing of hands.
- Desk barriers will be available upon request by parents.
- To minimize the use of water fountains, water bottle filling stations will be available in schools.
- Proper handwashing will continue to be emphasized.
- COVID-19 contact tracing will occur as required by the Department of Health.
- COVID-19 vaccination clinics will be available at school sites (schedule TBD).

3. **Will masks be mandatory in schools this fall?**
No. Masks were not required last year, and they will not be required this year. Parents are welcome to provide a mask for their child if they choose. Schools will have a supply of masks available.
4. **Will masks be mandatory on school buses?**
No. Parents are welcome to provide a mask for their child if they choose. Buses will have a supply of masks available.
5. **What are the COVID symptoms?**
Fever greater than 100.4°, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath or difficult breathing, headache, body or muscle aches, GI symptoms (diarrhea, vomiting, abdominal pain), new loss of taste or smell, nasal congestion/runny nose.
6. **What should I do if my child develops COVID symptoms away from school without any contact to a positive case?**
Students who have COVID symptoms that are not due to a pre-existing condition should be kept home until they are symptom-free without medication for 24 hours. Students exhibiting a new loss of taste or smell may not attend school. If the student experiences a loss of taste or smell, parents should contact their healthcare provider and follow Department of Health guidance for isolation.
7. **Will wellness/temperature checks be done daily upon arrival to school?**
No. Parents are encouraged to monitor their students for symptoms before school each day. Please keep your child home from school if they exhibit any COVID or other symptoms of illness.
8. **What will happen if a student exhibits multiple COVID symptoms while at school without any contact to a positive case?**
Similar to last year, students with multiple COVID symptoms will be sent to the health clinic, socially distanced, and given a mask. Parents will be contacted to determine if symptoms are due to a pre-existing condition. If not, the parent will be required to pick up the student. The student will be able to return to school once they are symptom-free without medication for 24 hours. A parent or doctor's note is required in order to excuse the absence.
9. **Are there any single symptoms that will require my student to be excluded from school without any contact to a positive case?**
Yes. If a student has any one of the following symptoms, they will be excluded from school: fever, diarrhea, vomiting, or new loss of taste or smell. The student will not be able to return to school until they are symptom-free without medication for 24 hours. A parent or doctor's note is required in order to excuse the absence. EXCEPTION: If the student experiences a loss of taste or smell, parents should contact their healthcare provider and follow Department of Health guidance.
10. **If my student is identified as a close contact through contact tracing at school, what will happen?**
The guidelines below explain how both Vaccinated and Non-Vaccinated close contacts will be handled at this time. (Also see the chart on pg. 5)

VACCINATED CLOSE CONTACTS:

- **Asymptomatic (no symptoms)** close contacts who are vaccinated or who have had COVID within the last 90 days **will not have to quarantine**. Protocol is to monitor for symptoms.
- **Symptomatic** close contacts should stay home and seek testing. If positive, notify Department of Health and stay home for the isolation period as directed by DOH. If negative, the student will be able to return to school once they are symptom-free without medication for 24 hours.

NON-VACCINATED CLOSE CONTACTS:

- **Asymptomatic (no symptoms)** close contacts who are **not vaccinated** who choose to remain in school should:
 - **Days 1-7**
 - Self-monitor for symptoms daily before school
 - Report to the school Health Tech/Nurse at the beginning of each day for a wellness check
 - Wear a mask (recommended)
 - Recommend practicing mitigation (distancing, frequent hand washing, etc.)
 - **Days 8-14**
 - Self-monitor for symptoms daily before and during school
 - Recommend practicing mitigation (mask, distancing, frequent hand washing, etc.)
- **Symptomatic** close contacts should quarantine and:
 - **Contact your physician and Department of Health for guidance**
 - **Early return to school with a documented negative COVID test (testing between Days 5-7)**
 - Return to school no earlier than Day 8
 - Self-monitor for symptoms daily before and during school
 - Recommend practicing mitigation Days 8-14 (mask, distancing, frequent hand washing, etc.)
 - **Without testing**
 - Student without testing may return to school no earlier than Day 11 if symptom-free without medication for 24 hours.
 - Self-monitor for symptoms daily before and during school
 - Recommend practicing mitigation Days 11-14 (mask, distancing, frequent hand washing, etc.)

11. If there is a positive case at home, will my student be excluded from school?

Yes. Parents should follow the guidance of the Department of Health regarding quarantine protocol.

12. Will students who are isolated or quarantined be able to make up their schoolwork?

Yes. Please contact your school for information on receiving make up work.

13. What if my child is medically fragile and plans to remain in brick-and-mortar instruction?

Parents of medically fragile students should contact their school to learn more about individualized safety measures for their student. Schools will have procedures to ensure individualized safety measures for medically fragile students.

In the event that an asymptomatic, unvaccinated close contact attends school and occupies the same classroom as a medically fragile student, the school will contact the parent to develop individualized safety measures. If the parent chooses to keep their medically fragile student at home during this time, absences will be excused, and the school will provide work for the student to complete while at home.

14. Will absences due to isolation/quarantine or COVID symptoms be excused?

Yes. Absences of this type will be excused with a note from a parent or doctor.

15. COVID-19 cancelled or modified many different types of school events last year, such as field trips and athletic and performing arts events. Will these return to normal this year?

Yes. Our plan is to allow normal school activities such as field trips to resume. Athletic events and extracurricular activities such as band and choral concerts will occur as normal. We will be mindful as we move into the school year and make adjustments if needed.

16. Will parents be able to volunteer in classrooms this fall and chaperone trips?

Yes. We are pleased to have our parents return to schools as volunteers. The volunteer application can be completed online at www.okaloosaschools.com

17. Will desk barriers be used again this year?

Desk barriers are not part of our classroom plan this year but will be available if requested by a parent.

18. Will mySchool Online be an option this year?

No. The mySchool Online program, and others like it across the state, are not available options this year. Okaloosa Online is the district's primary K-12 virtual option. Information about this option is available at www.okaloosaschools.com/schools/okaloosa-online.

We will all continue to be mindful of our surroundings and be prepared to adjust our routines if needed.

Please contact your child's school for more information.

Okaloosa County School District

COVID-19 Decision Tree

