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Memo: Youth settings COVID FAQ for Humboldt County

Dear Humboldt County youth service providers,

As we enter the fall school season with COVID-19 still very much a part of our lives, many questions are arising around youth programs, masking, distancing, testing, quarantine, and travel. This FAQ will be assessed periodically and updated when [community transmission](#) and hospitalizations are at a sustained lower level or new guidance is issued by CDC or CDPH.

- **What is covered in this FAQ under "youth settings"?**

"Youth settings" include K-12 schools and childcare, camps for youth, youth sports, youth theater, youth musical performances and band, as well as after school activities and programming. Updated CDC and CDPH guidance are forthcoming for youth settings and this info will be updated when new guidance is received. Specific [CDPH K-12 guidance](#) that allows for modified or shortened quarantine does not apply to early childhood education (ECE) settings caring for kids below kindergarten, however masking and distancing and other recommendations set forth here will reduce risk in ECE settings as well as K-12 settings.

- **Does everyone need to continue to wear masks indoors and outdoors, regardless of vaccination status?**

In general, people do not need to wear masks when outdoors in uncrowded areas where it is easy to maintain distance of 6 feet or more from those who are not in your household. However, per [CDC recommendations](#), in areas of [substantial to high transmission](#), people are strongly encouraged to wear a mask in crowded outdoor settings or during activities that involve sustained close contact with other people who are not part of your household. Some examples might include schoolyards at recess, playgrounds, sporting events, crowded parks, outdoor events, or concerts. Currently Humboldt County and Northern California are an area of high transmission. [The Humboldt County health order from August 6th on masking requires masks of everyone, regardless of vaccination status, indoors and in outdoor crowded spaces.](#)

- **Are youth required to mask when physically exerting themselves?**

Masks should be worn at most times with a few exceptions. A mask should not be worn if it obstructs breathing, in situations of higher intensity activity, like sports, running, or when water is present, and masks may become wet. This is consistent with previous masking guidance from CDPH and CDC. Some people may choose to wear a mask during physical activity if it does not obstruct breathing, especially if activity brings them in close contact with others outside their household. Masks should be allowed in settings of physical activity even if not required.

- **Will this guidance change once the new CDC recommendations for K-12 are released?**

CDPH and HCPH are closely monitoring anticipated updates from the CDC regarding K-12 and other youth settings and will update these recommendations periodically.

- **Do fully vaccinated staff need to wear a mask in a K-12 and other youth settings?**

[The Humboldt County health order from August 6th on masking requires masks of everyone, regardless of vaccination status, indoors and in outdoor crowded spaces.](#) This [local order](#) supersedes current [Cal OSHA guidance](#) for the workplace that allows fully vaccinated to go without a mask in settings where no youth are present, like an office space that youth do not enter. Everyone must always mask in all indoor and crowded outdoor settings, regardless of vaccination status, with few exceptions.

- **What about youth settings where everyone (staff and all youth attendees) is fully vaccinated?**

[The Humboldt County health order from August 6th on masking requires masks of everyone, regardless of vaccination status, indoors and in outdoor crowded spaces.](#) This [local order](#) supersedes current [Cal OSHA guidance](#) for the workplace that allows



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fully vaccinated to go without a mask in settings where no youth are present, like an office space that youth do not enter. Everyone must always mask in all indoor and crowded outdoor settings, regardless of vaccination status, with few exceptions.

- **Do players and spectators need to wear a mask when they are on the sidelines?**

In general, people do not need to wear masks when outdoors in uncrowded areas where it is easy to maintain distance of 6 feet or more from those who are not in your household. However, per [CDC recommendations](#), in areas of [substantial to high transmission](#), people are strongly encouraged to wear a mask in crowded outdoor settings or during activities that involve sustained close contact with other people who are not part of your household. Some examples might include schoolyards at recess, playgrounds, sporting events, outdoor festivals, or concerts. Currently Humboldt County and Northern California are an area of high transmission. [The Humboldt County health order from August 6th on masking requires masks of everyone, regardless of vaccination status, indoors and in outdoor crowded spaces.](#)

- **We have a COVID positive staff/youth in our school/organization, what do we do?**

Follow protocols set by your school or organization for identification and notification of [close contacts](#). You do not need to call public health to report this positive case and the close contacts as the report will come to the local health department through the [state reporting system \(CalREDIE\)](#). If a home test was used that does not report to the state reporting system, the staff/youth will need to retest with a method that does report to the state (<https://testing.covid19.ca.gov/get-started/>), or can go to a [local testing site](#). Have the positive person isolate at home and notify close contacts to quarantine for 10 days unless they qualify for modified or reduced quarantine as a K-12 student (see below). If you are part of a school, start a SPOT intake form in the [School Portal for Outbreak Tracking](#) and enter all info on the positive and any [close contacts](#).

- **Do I need to quarantine/test if I'm fully vaccinated and have close contact?**

Quarantine is not recommended for fully vaccinated students or staff who are exposed to COVID-19 per [Humboldt County Public Health orders on quarantine](#). CDC recently updated their [guidance for fully vaccinated](#) to recommend testing at day 3-5 from close contact to someone with COVID-19. Anyone with symptoms of COVID-19 should isolate, test, and consult their medical provider.

- **If I'm an unvaccinated student do I need to quarantine when exposed to COVID in a K-12 school setting?**

Exposures to COVID-19 positive person that happen inside supervised school settings are different than exposures that happen in the community or at home based on scientific research and data. [CDPH K-12 guidance](#) allows for supervised school-based exposures to be treated differently due to this science. Only unvaccinated students exposed while being supervised by school staff and wearing a mask by both the exposed student and the positive student (mask on mask exposure) will qualify for modified quarantine. All other unvaccinated close contacts fall under full 10-14 day quarantine. Fully vaccinated students do not need to quarantine but should test at day 3-5 after close contact exposure and monitor for symptoms for 14 days.

- **What is modified quarantine for unvaccinated students?**

Modified quarantine allows unvaccinated students to continue to attend in person instruction at a school when they have a mask-on-mask exposure in a supervised K-12 school setting. To qualify for modified quarantine the unvaccinated student exposure must be masked by both persons involved (positive case and the person who had close contact), called a mask-on-mask exposure. The unvaccinated student on modified quarantine may continue to attend in person instruction at school, but otherwise should be on home quarantine all other times. They are to avoid public places and gatherings and are not to attend extra-curricular activities or sports. To continue modified quarantine the unvaccinated student must test several times during the quarantine period. Preferred testing cadence is immediately upon notification of the close contact followed by a test every 3 days until 10 days have passed. Modified quarantine can end at day 7 with a negative test after day 5 after close contact.



- **CDC and CDPH allow for reduced 7 day quarantine for everyone who is unvaccinated, not only unvaccinated K-12 students. Why can't other unvaccinated residents in Humboldt reduce quarantine?**

CDC and CDPH have both allowed for more relaxed [quarantine guidance](#) to be adopted by local health departments when the local situations and needs support shorter quarantine duration. Humboldt County Public Health will review adoption of shortened 7 day quarantine with a negative test after day 5 for all residents when local cases support those relaxed standards. For now, all other quarantines will remain 10 days minimum, with 14 days being safest for the community. Allowing for relaxed quarantine for unvaccinated students will keep students in school longer, leading to less disruption in learning.

- **What if an unvaccinated student does not qualify for modified quarantine?**

If the unvaccinated student was exposed to close contact outside of a supervised school setting or was exposed in school with no mask, then modified quarantine is not an option. Regular rules of 10 day home quarantine would apply. In order to keep students in school for as many days as possible, regular quarantine may be shortened to a 7 day duration with a negative test after day 5 for any unvaccinated K-12 student, regardless of where the exposure occurred. Without testing quarantine always lasts 10 days. Modified and shortened quarantine are only available to K-12 students currently in Humboldt County. All other unvaccinated close contacts must quarantine for 10 days. Fully vaccinated students do not need to quarantine but should test at day 3-5 after close contact exposure and monitor for symptoms for 14 days.

- **How can we avoid need to quarantine in youth settings?**

Only students and youth participants who are within 6 feet of another person for 15 minutes or more would meet the definition of [close contact](#). Wearing a mask reduces the risk and allows for use of modified quarantine but does not eliminate close contact. By structuring youth activities with adequate distancing close contact can be avoided for the most part. Using physical distancing in youth activities will keep students in school and keep youth programs running. Fully vaccinated students do not need to quarantine but should test at day 3-5 after close contact exposure and monitor for symptoms for 14 days.

- **If we have a positive in a youth activity or a school classroom do we need to quarantine everyone and shut down?**

Only those who were unvaccinated and in [close contact](#) with the positive would need to quarantine. If physical distancing and masking were maintained, the risk of spread in these settings is low. If public health determines there is an [outbreak](#), they may require a classroom, a school, a youth setting, or a business to close to prevent further spread in that setting. Some schools or businesses may close voluntarily even when not required by public health. Fully vaccinated students do not need to quarantine but should test at day 3-5 after close contact exposure and monitor for symptoms for 14 days.

- **If an unvaccinated student is exposed by a close contact while wearing a mask in a supervised school setting, do they still need to quarantine?**

Yes, if the unvaccinated student who was close contact was wearing a mask in a supervised school setting indoors or outdoors and was within 6 feet for 15 minutes or of a known COVID positive person also wearing a mask during the exposure, they can qualify for modified quarantine explained above. If either person was without a mask, the unvaccinated student would need to quarantine for 10 days. Both quarantines could end after day 7 with a negative test done after day 5. Fully vaccinated students do not need to quarantine but should test at day 3-5 after close contact exposure and monitor for symptoms for 14 days.

- **An unvaccinated student was exposed by a close contact outside of school (with or without a mask), do they still need to quarantine?**

Yes, this unvaccinated student would need to quarantine for 10 days from the date of the exposure. [Humboldt County quarantine guidance](#) can be found online. You do not need an order from the county health department as [anyone in the county who is unvaccinated and exposed to COVID-19 must quarantine](#). A student in this situation could use shortened quarantine to be released after 7 days with a negative test after day 5 of the quarantine. Modified and shortened quarantine are only available to K-12 students. Fully vaccinated students do not need to quarantine but should test at day 3-5 after close contact exposure and monitor for symptoms for 14 days.



- **Can we use a home test for modified or shortened quarantine?**

No. Home tests do not report to the state reporting system, and therefore cannot be used during modified quarantine or to release from quarantine early at day 7. Coordinate with your school for in-school testing program that is available through the state.

- **Can a student who is positive continue attending school?**

No, anyone with a positive COVID-19 diagnosis must isolate for 10 days from the date of collection of the positive test or the onset of symptoms, regardless of vaccination status. A negative test later during the 10 days isolation period does not change isolation requirements and repeat testing is not recommended.

- **I'm a staff or student who tested positive, should I test again to end my isolation?**

No. Anyone with a positive test should not test again for 90 days unless they have new symptoms or are instructed to do so by a medical professional. If you are required to test weekly for work/school/team/organization, you will not have to test for those 90 days but should resume weekly testing again after 90 days has passed from the date of your positive test.

- **My child has COVID-19 symptoms, what should I do?**

Anyone with cold and flu symptoms should stay home until the symptoms resolve. A test is recommended if the symptoms are consistent with COVID-19 or a medical professional recommends testing. Please see [CDC recommendations on when to return to school](#).

- **Should my youth program use a pre-entry screening questionnaire?**

Pre-entry screening questions are strongly encouraged to reduce the risk in all youth settings. Pre-entry screening questions should include questions about recent COVID-19 symptoms, exposure to COVID-19 in the past 14 days, travel in the past 7 days, and any pending COVID-19 test results. Anyone who does not meet all screening questions criteria should be excluded from a youth setting until enough time has passed from symptoms, exposure, travel unless they qualify for exemptions due to vaccination status or modified quarantine available only to K-12 students. Symptomatic individuals who completed a 10 day isolation period or have a verified negative COVID-19 test would not be excluded.

- **What about COVID-19 testing in youth settings?**

Youth settings can improve safety by using selected testing. The state has made it easy for schools, businesses and organizations to become testing sites for the community: <https://testing.covid19.ca.gov/get-started/>. Training, supplies, and reporting platforms are all available through this program. Local public health can only provide testing to local healthcare providers, we do not supply local schools with rapid or PCR testing that is available through the state program.

- **What is Pre-entry Testing?**

Pre-entry testing is testing performed prior to someone entering an event, competition, congregate setting like a school, or other venue or business which can reduce the risk of spreading infection for people who are entering these settings. Proof of a negative test in the past 72 hours or offering rapid testing on site are ways to accomplish pre-entry testing. Symptomatic individuals should not be allowed to enter and would be screened out using pre-entry screening. Symptomatic individuals who completed a 10 day isolation period or have a verified negative COVID-19 test would not be excluded.

- **Who should receive Pre-entry Testing?**

*Unvaccinated Individuals*

Individuals should have pre-entry testing performed if they have not been fully vaccinated [\[1\]](#) and will be taking part in activities that put them or others at higher risk for COVID-19 exposure. Pre-entry testing should be considered for those attending large indoor social or mass gatherings (such as large private events, live performance events, sporting events, theme parks, etc.), **competing in high contact sports**, or other events in crowded or poorly-ventilated settings.



### *Vaccinated Individuals*

Fully vaccinated individuals do not need to undergo pre-entry COVID-19 testing per CDC recommendations at this time. Events, venues, schools, or businesses could require vaccinated individuals to also undergo testing if they choose, but that is not recommended by public health officials.

- **What is considered a high contact sport, and should we be testing?**

CDPH ranked sports based on their level of contact in the [CDPH youth sports guidance](#) applied last winter and spring. Given current COVID case rates in Humboldt County that are higher than they were during those times, we strongly recommend following testing guidelines from that guidance listed under Purple Tier. Any sport listed as low contact sport or Purple Tier sport is not recommended to test at this time. All other sports are strongly recommended to test under the guidance listed as “Play in Less Restrictive Tiers: Outdoor High-Contact Sports.” Any sport or event can decide to test to add a layer of safety for their event or organization. CDPH guidance did not recommend testing those under the age of 13 for youth sports. The state has made it easy for schools, businesses, and organizations to become testing sites for the community: <https://testing.covid19.ca.gov/get-started/>. Training, supplies, and reporting platforms are all available through this program. Local public health can only provide testing to local healthcare providers, we do not supply local schools with rapid or PCR testing that is available through the state program.

- **If I’m fully vaccinated and have a positive COVID-19 test do I need to isolate?**

Everyone who has a positive COVID-19 test must isolate for 10 days from the onset of symptoms or date of collection of the positive test, regardless of vaccination status. A negative test later during the 10 days isolation period does not change isolation requirements and repeat testing is not recommended.

- **I had COVID-19 and now I’m required to test for work/school/team/organization?**

Anyone with a positive test should not test again for 90 days unless they have new symptoms or are instructed to do so by a medical professional. If you are required to test weekly for work/school/team/organization, you will not have to test for those 90 days but should resume weekly testing again after 90 days has passed from the date of your positive test. Fully vaccinated individuals should not participate in weekly screening test programs.

- **Should individuals who are traveling have pre-entry (pre-travel) testing?**

Individuals who are not fully vaccinated and must travel should follow pre-entry (pre-travel) testing recommendations in [CDC travel guidance](#) before and after travel.

- **What should we do if we are travelling before attending K-12 or other youth settings?**

The state of [California travel advisory from April 2, 2021](#) is now historical. While no local travel restrictions are in place, CDPH recommends following the [CDC travel recommendations](#) for domestic and international travel, especially around testing pre and post travel. Consider quarantining after travel. CDC has put together [tips for safer travel with unvaccinated children](#). Vaccinated persons should only test when required for travel based on destination. [Unvaccinated travelers are strongly recommended to test and quarantine after travel](#).

- **What is non-essential travel of unvaccinated persons? When can I travel safely without testing/quarantine?**

**Except in connection with essential travel, Californians should avoid non-essential travel unless they are fully vaccinated.** Non-essential travelers who are not fully vaccinated should get tested with a viral test 1-3 days before travel, and get tested 3-5 days upon arrival to their destination ( [CDC travel guidance](#) ). Unvaccinated travelers should stay home and self-quarantine for a full 7 days after travel, even if their test is negative. This includes those who are under the age of 12 who are not yet eligible for vaccination. Non-essential travelers who are not fully vaccinated and don't get tested should stay home and [self-quarantine](#) for 10 days after travel, including those under the age of 12 who are not yet eligible for vaccination.



"Non-essential travel" includes travel that is considered [tourism or recreational in nature](#).

"Essential travel" is travel associated with the operation, maintenance, or usage of critical infrastructure or otherwise required or expressly authorized by law (including other applicable state and local public health directives), including work and study, critical infrastructure support, economic services and supply chains, health, immediate medical care, and safety and security. Persons who routinely cross state or country borders for essential travel do not need to quarantine.



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Resources:

Face Coverings:

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/Face-Coverings-QA.aspx#>  
<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/guidance-for-face-coverings.aspx>  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/outdoor-activities.html>

Travel:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/travel-during-covid19.html> (current)  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/international-travel-during-covid19.html>  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/travel-risk.html>  
<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/Travel-Advisory.aspx> (historical)

K-12 and youth programs:

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/K-12-Guidance-2021-22-School-Year.aspx>  
<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/Schools-FAQ.aspx>  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/summer-camps.html>  
<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/outdoor-indoor-recreational-sports.aspx>  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/index.html>

Testing:

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/Updated-COVID-19-Testing-Guidance.aspx>  
<https://testing.covid19.ca.gov/get-started/>

Data:

<https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view>  
<https://humboldtgov.org/2749/Dashboard>

Isolation and Quarantine:

<https://humboldtgov.org/2831/Isolation-and-Quarantine-Orders>

Fully Vaccinated Guidance:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated.html>  
<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/COVID-19-Public-Health-Recommendations-for-Fully-Vaccinated-People.aspx>

