



# Lorain County Schools Common Re-opening Guide

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, all school districts and superintendents in Lorain County have worked together closely with the Lorain County Educational Services Center (LCESC) and Lorain County Public Health (LCPH). All school leaders in Lorain County are committed to provide the best learning options for students during the pandemic. COVID-19 is constantly evolving and will cause changes to [public health alerts](#), the health of schools, school plans and logistics.

**Purpose of the Lorain County Schools Common Re-opening Guide:** To accompany [COVID-19 Health & Prevention Guidance for Ohio's K-12 Schools](#) with common and practical strategies for Lorain County school leaders to tailor to their unique needs and opportunities.

## **There is no such thing as zero risk for any disease.**

- The more people a student or staff member interacts with, and the longer that interaction is, the higher the risk of COVID-19 spread.
- The risk of COVID-19 spread increases in school settings as follows:
  - Lowest Risk: Students and teachers engage in virtual-only classes, activities, and events.
  - Increasing Risk: Small, in-person classes, activities, and events. Groups of students stay together, with the same teacher throughout/across school days and groups do not mix. Students remain at least 6 feet apart and do not share objects.
  - Highest Risk: Full sized, in-person classes, activities, and events. Students are not spaced apart, share classroom materials or supplies, and mix between classes and activities.
- Personal prevention behaviors (such as handwashing, staying home when sick) and environmental cleaning and disinfection are important ways to help lower the risk of COVID-19 exposure and spread during school sessions and activities.

## **COVID-19 spreads easily between people.**

- The virus spreads through respiratory droplets that are released when an infected person talks, coughs or sneezes.
- The virus can also spread to hands from a contaminated surface and then to the nose or mouth, causing infection.
- People with COVID-19 report a wide range of symptoms, which can include: Fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea.
  - Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus.

**Practice and promote healthy behaviors**, that done together, reduce the spread of COVID-19:

- Wash your hands with soap and water, or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol if you don't have soap and water.
- Disinfect frequently touched surfaces.
- Stay 6 feet away from others.
- Wear a face covering to keep from spreading the virus to others.
- Stay home if you are sick.

	<b>Risk mitigation strategies</b>	<b>High risk* considerations</b>
<b>Assess for symptoms</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask caregivers to do a health symptom check at home every day before sending their students to school.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Consider a roll call in home classrooms... <i>Who had a health check at home this morning?</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Daily health symptom checks for staff and volunteers may be done in a variety of ways:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Self-reported via an online survey.</li> <li>○ Use staff leads to connect via phone or during cohort meetings before school begins.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Create flexibility in policies and requirements:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Sick leave policies should not penalize people for staying home when symptomatic, or in quarantine or isolation.</li> <li>○ Consider not having perfect attendance awards, and not assessing schools based on absenteeism.</li> <li>○ Consider a new character award for students who display safe, healthy, and kind behaviors.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remind caregivers and staff to continue daily health symptom checks.</li> <li>• School may or may not choose to monitor symptoms during virtual / distance learning and working.</li> </ul>

\* LCPH will notify schools if public health risk in the community reaches a point that requires a shift to virtual / distance learning.

<p><b>Wash &amp; sanitize hands</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give students time and reminders to wash or sanitize their hands throughout the day, especially before and after: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ the school day</li> <li>○ eating</li> <li>○ recess</li> <li>○ changing classrooms</li> <li>○ using the bathroom</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Post handwashing and sanitizing reminders, <a href="#">download here.</a></li> </ul>	
<p><b>Clean &amp; sanitize surfaces</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When avoiding shared materials isn't possible, build in time for students and staff to disinfect surfaces before it's in use by another person.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Practice social distancing</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Layout ideas to maximize social distancing for students and staff: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Space seating and desks 3 - 6 feet apart. Consider using plastic physical dividers and/or face coverings as additional barriers when social distancing (6 feet) cannot be maintained.</li> <li>○ Turn desks to face in the same direction (rather than facing each other), or have students sit on only one side of tables, spaced apart.</li> <li>○ Reduce the seating in break rooms.</li> <li>○ Encourage the use of outdoor spaces.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Group students when possible and when it makes sense to reduce possible transmission, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ By grade during before and after school care.</li> <li>○ By neighbors when riding the bus.</li> <li>○ With staff cohorts.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Stagger dismissal of classes, periods, and transportation to maximize social distancing and to reduce gatherings of people.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not every high risk level will require building or district wide shut down. Be flexible and consider when isolated incidents can be addressed at the classroom or bus level.</li> <li>• Shift to virtual / distance learning under direction from LCPH.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LCPH recommends bus riders sit 6 feet apart if face coverings aren't required. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Without face coverings required on the bus: 1 person per seat, every other row.</li> <li>○ With face coverings required on the bus: 2 people per seat, every other row if possible.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• LCPH recommends assigned seating in the bus, classroom, and cafeteria, etc. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ This will limit the spread of COVID-19.</li> <li>○ This will help close contacts to be identified and notified when there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 among students or staff.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Inform parents of alternative transportation options. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <a href="#">SchoolPool</a> is a way families can connect to get their children to and from school by carpool, walk pools, bike pools, or arranging bus buddies for school buses. Call NOACA with questions at 216-241-2414.</li> <li>○ Encourage walking and biking if possible in your district. LCPH can assist with <a href="#">Safe Routes to School</a> plans and activities for encouragement. Contact <a href="mailto:HealthEd@LorainCountyHealth.com">HealthEd@LorainCountyHealth.com</a></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Require student bus riders to wear a face covering.</li> <li>• If a district requires students to wear face coverings, the district may refuse to transport a student who refuses to wear one.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Implement face coverings policy</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A face covering might interfere with learning in some situations, such as speech therapy, social and emotional skill building, science lab, etc. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Short-term idea: Wear a face shield and keep 6 feet apart. When done with task, resume wearing face covering.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• LCPH recommends that face coverings be worn in places where social distancing (6 feet) isn't possible, such as the bus, hallways, while changing classes, and during arrival and dismissal. Consider using plastic physical dividers and/or face coverings as additional barriers when social distancing (6 feet) cannot be maintained. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Short-term idea: Take occasional face covering breaks when social distancing is possible, such as in the classroom, during recess or on a class walk.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

## When a student or staff member is diagnosed with COVID-19:

- The LCPH epidemiology team will communicate with confirmed COVID-19 cases/guardians, school leaders, and any close contacts identified. This is known as contact tracing. [Watch a contact tracing video](#) to learn more.
  - Close contacts of a COVID-19 case, typically, are persons who spent more than 10 minutes in close proximity (within 6 feet) of the positive case. Close contacts will be determined on a case-by-case basis.
  - A 14-day quarantine will be required of any student or staff member considered a close contact as determined by LCPH.
- All confirmed COVID-19 cases will be isolated, monitored daily, and released by LCPH if they are a Lorain County resident. If the person is not a Lorain County resident, LCPH will communicate with the associated health district.
- LCPH will provide communication templates for schools' use to notify families and staff of the following:
  - Positive case in a classroom
  - Positive case in a building
  - Public health risk level updates and pandemic facts
  - Local testing options

## If symptoms begin while at school:

- If a student, staff, or volunteer begins to show symptoms or has a temperature above 100°F while at school, they should be immediately separated from other students, staff, or volunteers, given a face covering, monitored by a staff member or school nurse wearing appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) and maintaining physical distance when possible, and then sent home. The space where an individual waits before he or she goes home should be separate from the nurse's office and other areas students are likely to visit.
- Share COVID-19 testing location options.
- If sickness is **not** COVID-19, this person may return to school when ... *TBD*
- If sick persons had contact with someone confirmed, or are confirmed, or are probable to have COVID-19, they must... *TBD*

## Recess:

- Have outdoor recess as often as possible, especially during times of increased risk and elevated public health risk levels.
- Utilize structured recess activities, such as nature walks and [zoned recess](#) to limit students' physical contact with others.
- Wash or sanitize hands before and after recess.
- Post playground signage, [available for download](#).
- Incorporate brain breaks into the day to help students learn to manage stress. Try [Yoga 4 Classrooms](#) and [Go Noodle](#).

## Food services:

- Follow guidance from Responsible Restart Ohio, in coordination with your school's LCPH sanitarian. Contact your sanitarian with any food or safety questions.
- LCPH recommends:
  - Wash or sanitize hands prior to eating and afterwards.
  - When possible reduce the mixing of student groups. Provide 6 foot spacing between table edges and individuals.
  - No self-service buffet or individual condiments.
  - Maximize social distancing by using multiple places for students and staff to eat (classroom, cafeteria, gymnasium, outside, breakroom, etc).

## Support is available:

- LCPH: [LorainCountyHealth.com/coronavirus](https://loraincountyhealth.com/coronavirus), [LorainCountyHealth.com/data](https://loraincountyhealth.com/data), [LorainCountyHealth.com/data](https://loraincountyhealth.com/data) 440-322-6367
- LCESC: [LorainCountyESC.org](https://loraincountyesc.org), 440-324-5777

## During typical and atypical times, here's a snapshot of school health in Lorain County:

- LCPH works to make sure students have a healthy and safe environment to learn and play. [Click to learn more.](#)
- The school nurse team provides contracted services to students in 9 of the 14 school districts and in 3 independent schools. They regularly communicate with school nurses in the additional districts and schools.
- Health education specialists provide resources and technical assistance to districts or school wellness teams using the [Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child](#) model.
- Registered sanitarians conduct [school environment inspections](#) twice per year in every school building to ensure school environments are safe places where students can learn and play.