



Public Health Department

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Health Advisory

To: School Districts and School Nurses
From: Robert Bernstein, M.D. (signed original on file)
Date: August 27, 2021
Re: Mandated COVID-19 Reporting by Schools

Butte County Department of Public Health (BCPH) would like to remind schools that per AB 86 (2021) and California Code Title 17, section 2500, **schools are required to report COVID-19 cases to the local public health department.**

Background

Evidence and data about COVID-19 transmission coupled with the experiences of schools both nationally and internationally demonstrates that schools, particularly elementary schools, can operate in-person instruction safely with the correct safety protocols in place. With this directive, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) issued the following guidance: [COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for K-12 Schools in California, 2021-22 School Year](#).

To be equipped to prevent and mitigate ongoing community COVID-19 transmission, a comprehensive and coordinated approach for the secure sharing of vital data and information regarding COVID-19 infections among school employees and students is necessary, especially in light of current epidemiological conditions.

The sharing of identified case information data with public health professionals is therefore necessary to ensure that state and local public health experts can respond to confirmed cases of COVID-19 who have been present at a school site, to track and understand the extent of disease transmission within the state, and to support communities with appropriate prevention strategies and support. Accordingly, to monitor and prevent the spread of COVID-19, it is necessary for CDPH and local health jurisdictions to have accurate information about COVID-19 infections among school employees and students. Specifically, the prompt, secure, and confidential sharing of information about individuals within the school community who have tested positive for COVID-19 is critical to ensure that public health authorities can rapidly respond by:

1. Instituting necessary case investigation and contact tracing;
2. Focusing public health resources to effectively provide comprehensive support to the affected schools related to further investigation, mitigation strategies, and operational plans;
3. Assessing and monitoring the practices and activities that may have led to the infection or transmission of COVID-19;
4. Taking appropriate measures to protect the health of both the school community and population-at-large; and
5. Ensuring that CDPH and local health jurisdictions have the information necessary to accurately assess the impact of school reopening on COVID-19 transmission and case rates to effectively update operative public health guidance and directives as necessary.

Schools are authorized under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) to disclose personally identifiable information without parental consent to local health departments regarding COVID-19 testing and cases. (20 USC § 1232g(b)(1)(I).) In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, California has been under a State of Emergency since March 4, 2020. California continues to see the dire effects of this pandemic through limited ICU capacities and new cases and deaths each day. The COVID-19 pandemic poses an extreme threat to the health and safety of all Californians. Even with protocols in place to mitigate the transmission of COVID-19, the presence of an individual who has tested positive of COVID-19 on a K-12 public or private school campus is an emergency that poses a risk to health or safety of students and employees present on the campus. Reporting to the local health officer the presence of a positive case of COVID-19 in an individual who is or has been present on a K-12 public or private school campus is necessary to protect the health and safety of students and employees present on the campus. California law (17 C.C.R. section 2508) also requires anyone in charge of a K-12 public or private school kindergarten to report at once to the local health officer the presence or suspected presence of any of the communicable disease, which includes COVID-19.

How To Report

To report a COVID-19 positive person identified at your school, please submit an [Exposure Report](#) on the BCPH Website located at www.buttecounty.net/ph/COVID19.

For further information regarding COVID-19 for schools, please visit our BCPH Website. For information specific to school reporting, contact Yesenia Raya at (530) 552-3840. For information regarding the CDPH K-12 guidance, contact Rosie Alaniz at (530) 552-3889.

Resources

[Butte County Department of Public Health](#)
[California Department of Public Health](#)

Categories of urgency levels:

Health Alert: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention

Health Advisory: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action

Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action