



April 16, 2021

Dear Douglas County School District Staff and Families,

On behalf of the Tri-County Health Department, I want to clarify some misinformation that has circulated regarding moving some Douglas County School District (DCSD) schools to temporary remote learning and how DCSD quarantines students in the case of a COVID-19 exposure at a school. The following information is intended to help clarify what DCSD must do in order to be in compliance with public health orders and state requirements.

Moving Individual Schools to Temporary Remote Learning

Recently, the Tri-County Health Department (TCHD) directed some DCSD schools to move to remote learning for a 14-day period. TCHD's decision was in alignment with Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) requirements that were in place at the time these schools transitioned to remote learning. The decision to move the affected DCSD schools to remote learning is based on state requirements. When a school exceeds a threshold of the number of outbreaks occurring during a 14-day period, CDPHE requirements state that the school must move to remote learning for 14-days. Like DCSD, we know students are best served in the classroom and we do our best to balance that need with student safety, and the decision to temporarily move a school to remote learning is not one that is taken lightly.

How Schools Quarantine Students

When it is determined that a COVID-19 exposure has occurred in a school setting, the schools must refer to a [quarantine decision flow chart](#) to determine whether to utilize targeted contact identification or enhanced contact identification to determine close contacts (i.e., those who may have been exposed). These criteria include school setting characteristics such as use of seating charts, mask use, higher risk activities, or intermixing of classes. Once contact tracing is completed in accordance with state requirements, then persons identified as close contacts are asked to quarantine. Following case and outbreak guidance, including the flow chart, is mandatory and schools must exclude students based on the specific characteristics of the setting in which the exposure occurred.

Media may sometimes report about this in a way that makes it sound like Tri-County Health Department and school districts can make quarantine decisions locally. However, **schools must, and do, follow CDPHE case and outbreak guidance and quarantine students based on this guidance.**

DCSD schools are doing a great job of following this flow chart and following TCHD and CDPHE health orders. We appreciate the extra time and resources that DCSD schools are dedicating to the tedious task of contact tracing during this unprecedented time.

What Does the County Commissioners' Decision Mean for Schools?

On Tuesday, April 13, the Douglas County Commissioners voted to opt-out of a TCHD Public Health Order. This will enable local businesses to determine what capacities are best for them, their patrons, and their employees. The Commissioners' resolution, however, does not have any effect on state-issued mandates such as face mask requirements. In addition, school districts and TCHD must follow public health orders from the state of Colorado. Therefore, requirements for schools to quarantine students who are exposed to COVID-19, and to follow other health and safety protocols, remain in effect for DCSD and other school districts across the state. Yesterday evening, the State of Colorado issued a revised public health order for schools and school districts which we hope will help eliminate confusion and misinformation.

We understand that the effects and restrictions created by confusing information in recent media articles only fuels that frustration. We appreciate our partnership with the community and the Douglas County School District. Our intent always is to keep students in the classroom as safely as possible while following the state's requirements.

Sincerely,



Dr. John M. Douglas, Jr.
Executive Director