

FAQs for new PA DOH and PDE guidelines for schools in handling COVID-19 Cases in schools, face coverings, and close contacts

Where did the new changes come from and when?

Order of the Pennsylvania Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Health, issued November 23, 2020, public school entities in counties with two consecutive weeks of substantial transmission must attest to complying to the following to continue offering any in-person instruction:

- The [Updated Order of the Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Health Requiring Universal Face Coverings](#), including necessary exceptions and [associated guidance](#), and
- The [Recommendations for Pre-K to 12 Schools Following Identification of a Case\(s\) of COVID-19](#).

Who does this apply to?

All Pennsylvania Public Schools that resided within a county that is in the substantial level of transmission. Those schools must attest that they will adhere to the Universal Face Covering order and Recommendations for Pre-K to 12 Schools following Identification of a Case(s) of COVID-19

The Athens Area District has attested that will adhere to the above requirements on **November 25th**. And that attestation can be viewed on the district website under the COVID-19 resources tab.

COVID-19 CASES WITHIN THE ATHENS AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

How the district will handle cases of COVID-19 within our district/buildings(12/07/2020)?

*** We will be using the required metrics to determine if remote learning is necessary at any time. The charts follow below. Every district that signed the attestation form must adhere to the guidelines. The decisions will be made by building not as a whole district so our students and families need to be prepared to move to remote learning if we meet the following criteria within a 14 day rolling window.**

The dashboard will be updated as any new cases arise.

Per PDE guidance, schools are divided into groups. AASD has schools in two categories: less than and more than 500 students.

Bradford County is labeled as Substantial and AASD is operating under the following metrics:

Who is counted towards the 14 day rolling period window?

Any staff member who works in a building and any student that attends that building for in-person learning on a full time or part time basis. **NOTE:** *Students that participate in full livestream or our ONLINE academy do not need to be counted toward the 14 day rolling period. Or any student who is on an extended leave from school for medical reasons not related to COVID.*

What students/staff members are included in a school building's rolling 14-day period?

*The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [case definitionOpens In A New Window](#) for COVID-19 includes both confirmed and probable cases. Therefore, the case count for a school building would include any individual (students or staff) with a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19 who was **physically present in the school setting while infectious**, including but not limited to, instruction, work, sports, or extracurricular activities.*

NOTE: Cases and close contacts excused from school must complete their isolation or quarantine period regardless of how long the school building may be closed.

When is a COVID-19 case attributed to a school's 14 day rolling period?

Each COVID-19 positive student or staff member will be attributed to the 14 day rolling period on the date they were last in a school building.

When a school building is required to close and go to remote learning what happens to the 14 day rolling period?

The 14 day rolling window period resets after each time a school building is required to close due to COVID-19 cases.

How are the Athens Area School Classified?

Each school is classified on its normal student enrollment.

2 schools are classified as small (<500 student) - S.R.U Elementary & Harlan Rowe Middle School

2 schools are classified as medium (500-900 students) Lynch-Bustin Elementary & Athens Area High School

Recommendations for Small (<500 Students) Pre-K to 12 School Buildings Following Identification of a Case(s) of COVID-19

<u>Level of Community Transmission in the County</u>	Number of Cases of COVID-19 Within a Rolling 14-Day Period: 1 student or 1 staff	Number of Cases of COVID-19 Within a Rolling 14-Day Period: 2-4 students/staff in same school building	Number of Cases of COVID-19 Within a Rolling 14-Day Period: 5+ students/staff in same school building
Substantial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School should consider altering schedule to significantly decrease number of students on site • Clean area(s) where case spent time • Public health staff will direct close contacts to quarantine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School should consider altering schedule to significantly decrease number of students on site • Close school(s) for 3-7 days* • Clean area(s) where cases spent time • Public health staff will direct close contacts to quarantine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School should consider altering schedule to significantly decrease number of students on site • Close school(s) for 14 days* • Clean entire school • Public health staff will direct close contacts to quarantine

***If case investigations, contact tracing, and cleaning and disinfecting can be accomplished in a faster time frame, the length of closure time may be shortened.**

Recommendations for Medium (500-900 students) Pre-K to 12 School Buildings Following Identification of a Case(s) of COVID-19

<p align="center"><u>Level of Community Transmission in the County</u></p>	<p align="center">Number of Cases of COVID-19 Within a Rolling 14-Day Period:</p> <p align="center">1-3 students or staff</p>	<p align="center">Number of Cases of COVID-19 Within a Rolling 14-Day Period:</p> <p align="center">4-6 students/staff in same school building</p>	<p align="center">Number of Cases of COVID-19 Within a Rolling 14-Day Period:</p> <p align="center">7+ students/staff in same school building</p>
<p align="center">Substantial†</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School should consider altering schedule to significantly decrease number of students on site • Clean area(s) where case spent time • Public health staff will direct close contacts to quarantine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School should consider altering schedule to significantly decrease number of students on site • Close school(s) for 3-7 days* • Clean area(s) where cases spent time • Public health staff will direct close contacts to quarantine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School should consider altering schedule to significantly decrease number of students on site • Close school(s) for 14 days* • Clean entire school • Public health staff will direct close contacts to quarantine

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UNIVERSAL FACE COVERINGS

The Athens Area School District has been requiring the wearing of Face Coverings since the start of the school year, what does this updated order change for our students, the community, and staff? Below is the updated information concerning Face Coverings, the highlighted sections are changes that Athens Area School District will be implementing.

Face Coverings are required:

A. Indoors or in an enclosed space, where another person or persons who are not members of the individual's household are present in the same space, irrespective of physical distance.

B. Outdoors with others who are not members of a person's household and unable to maintain sustained physical distance.

C. Participating in indoor physical activity in a gym, fitness center or group fitness classes, where another person or persons who are not members of the individual's household are present in the same space, irrespective of physical distance.

The following exceptions exist for the universal face covering order:

A. If wearing a face covering would either cause a medical condition, or exacerbate an existing one, including respiratory issues that impede breathing, a mental health condition or a disability

B. When working alone and isolated from interaction with other people with little or no expectation of in-person interaction.

A school must:

1. Require that all people, including their employees, customers, teachers, students and visitors, wear a face covering and take reasonable steps to enforce the requirement.

2. Mitigate or eliminate employee, teacher, student, visitor, and customer exposure to people who cannot wear or refuse to wear a face covering.

3. Post prominent signs that are visible to all people—including employees, teachers, students, customers, and visitors—stating that face coverings are required by the Order of the Secretary of Health.

4. Provide reasonable accommodations to people, including their employees, teachers, students, customers, and visitors, who state they have a medical condition, mental health condition, or disability that makes it unreasonable for the person to maintain a face covering.

OTHER QUESTIONS

For schools that transition to full remote either by choice or at the direction of PDE/DOH, can staff (teachers, aides, administrators, operations staff, clerical/support staff, etc.) continue to report to/work from the school building?

Any updates to the FAQ will reflect that the telework recommendation doesn't apply to schools. Therefore, yes, staff can continue to work from the school building.

Are there changes to contact tracing and close contacts?

Yes, The Athens Area School District will implement some changes to contact tracing when it is required within the school. Students or staff that are closer than 6 feet for greater than 15 minutes will be considered a close contact and will be excluded from school/building for 14 days. Also, district officials will work with the Department of Health to determine if other factors need to be considered; such as type of face covering, or time of exposure to a classroom or grade level.

A recent update to Close contacts can be found here: [DOH Health Alert Network \(HAN\)](#)

Close contacts are individuals who have been exposed (within 6 feet distance for at least 15 consecutive minutes) to someone who is a case during the infectious period, and it is unknown if the contact will go on to develop COVID-19. Public health staff determine close contacts after a case interview. In some school situations, it might be difficult to determine whether individuals are contacts or whether an entire cohort, classroom, or other group (extracurricular activity members) might need to be considered exposed, particularly if people have spent time together indoors.

Public health staff will work with school administrators to determine whether entire classrooms or other cohort groups need to be quarantined. Based on these discussions, public health staff will direct close contacts to **quarantine** for 14 days from the last exposure to the case; this includes household contacts (like siblings and parents/guardians/caregivers) who attend or work in other schools.

NOTE: The Athens Area School District will require all household members of a close contact who attend or work in school to quarantine.

