



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Marc Elrich
County Executive

Raymond L. Crowel, Psy.D.
Director

September 16, 2021

Dr. Monifa B. McKnight
Interim Superintendent of Schools
Montgomery County Public Schools
850 Hungerford Drive
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Dear Dr. McKnight:

I am writing to provide an update to the County guidance provided by Dr. Gayles on September 8, 2021. In that guidance, Dr. Gayles stated that "...close contact students should quarantine pending a negative test result." That guidance was based upon the increased contagiousness of the Delta variant of the virus, the percentage of students who are not yet eligible to be vaccinated, and the volume of students returning to in-person education for the first time in more than a year.

That County guidance differed from the State's, which was written in March of this year. The State, wisely recognizing that its guidance could not anticipate all possible circumstances, (such as a highly transmissible variant) provided for consultation with the Local Health Department.

Throughout the pandemic both State and County guidance have been continually adjusted and revised to reflect changes in conditions. The implementation of rapid (antigen) testing of symptomatic students in the schools gives us an opportunity to revise the County's previous guidance and allows us to better balance the health and safety needs with the socio-emotional and academic needs of the students.

Based on the implementation of rapid testing and MCPS' ability to follow CDC guidance regarding in classroom distancing, close contact guidelines, and face coverings, the County's guidance now aligns with the State with two minor adjustments:

- a. Symptomatic, not fully vaccinated students who receive a negative rapid test result will be requested to take a confirmatory PCR test. If the PCR test results are negative, not close contacts will not need to quarantine. If the test is positive, not fully vaccinated close contacts will need to quarantine. While awaiting the PCR test results, close contacts will not be asked to quarantine.

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- b. If for any reason a test cannot be completed for a symptomatic unvaccinated student, close contact quarantine for not fully vaccinated students will only be necessary if there is a known exposure, or if the level of exposure cannot be reliably confirmed. Based on rapid test results to date, we expect that this circumstance will not arise often. If we cannot confirm that there was no exposure, quarantine of not fully vaccinated close contacts will minimize the risk of transmission.

Finally, Dr. Gayles' September 8th guidance provided a broad outline for close contact investigations and tracing. We will need to meet collectively to refine the details of how best to identify and assess close contacts, and to outline our respective roles in taking prompt action to minimize the spread of the virus and to avoid unnecessary quarantining of close contacts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "RL Crowel". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Raymond L. Crowel, Psy.D.
Director

RLC:nc

cc: James Bridgers Jr., Ph.D., MBA, Acting Chief, Public Health Services
James D'Andrea, Chief of Staff, MCPS
Joan Glick, RN-C, MSN, Sr. Administrator, School Health Services