



## Changes, Updates, and New Resources NCDHHS K-12 Public Health Guidance

This document is designed to help you keep track of the significant, ongoing changes and new available supports for schools across North Carolina. It does not capture every change, such as correcting typos. You'll find new information shared approximately every month to capture updates to the NCDHHS K-12 public health documents supporting schools during COVID-19.

To view all NCDHHS school-related guidance documents, visit <https://covid19.ncdhhs.gov/guidance#schools>.

### Key Changes- 8/18/2021

#### [StrongSchoolsNC Public Health Toolkit \(K-12\)](#)

- Aligned symptom list with [CDC](#) guidance
- Added additional guidance on higher-risk instruction/extracurricular activities, such as exercising, playing wind instruments, or singing

### Key Changes – 7/29/2021

#### [StrongSchoolsNC Public Health Toolkit \(K-12\)](#)

- Aligned guidance with CDC's 7/27/21 update, to include recommendation for universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors to K-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status

#### [NCDHHS K-12 COVID-19 Testing Program Guidance](#)

- New guidance document posted

#### [Vaccine Operational Guidance for Schools](#)

- Updated to include information on students 12+ getting vaccinated and to help support back to school vaccination events

### Key Changes – 7/21/2021

The StrongSchoolsNC Public Health Toolkit has been updated to align to the [CDC Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools](#) updated on July 9, 2021. **To allow for operational transition time, the provisions of this Toolkit are effective July 30<sup>th</sup> at 5pm.**

**Below is a summary of the major updates to the Toolkit from the previous version:**

- Each section of the Toolkit has been organized into categories that prioritize implementation of the strategies that have been shown to be most effective in lowering the risk of COVID-19 exposure and spread in school sessions and school activities:

- o Strategies that **SHOULD** be implemented by all schools. These are strategies that, if not implemented, create conditions of high risk for COVID-19 exposure and spread. **NCDHHS strongly advises that school leaders adopt all the strategies in the SHOULD sections.**
- o Strategies that school leaders **COULD CONSIDER** adopting. These are strategies to provide additional layers of prevention and that, if implemented, will further reduce the risk of COVID-19 exposure and spread.
- Added information on offering and promoting COVID-19 vaccination.
- Revised to emphasize the COVID-19 prevention strategies most important for in-person learning for K-12 schools - most importantly, promoting vaccinations and proper and consistent use of face coverings.
- Added language on the importance of offering in-person learning, regardless of whether all the prevention strategies can be implemented at the school. For example, students should not be excluded from full-time, in-person learning to accommodate physical distancing. Instead, other prevention strategies, in particular consistent and proper masking, should be used.
- Updated to align with guidance for fully vaccinated people.
- Added additional guidance on testing strategies
- Added modified quarantine guidance for students after a close contact in which both people were wearing masks.
- Removed references to options for Plans A, B, and C.
- Removed reference to remote learning requirement.
- Additionally, the following actions were **removed** that are not supported by current evidence or are no longer needed due to the lower rates of community transmission and increased rates of vaccination including:
  - o Limit nonessential visitors
  - o Discontinue activities that bring a large group together, such as field trips or assemblies
  - o Keep students in small cohorts
  - o Direct the flow of traffic by designating hallways as one way or designating certain doors for entrance or exit
  - o Recommend that everyone wear a face covering outdoors
  - o Keep students' personal items separate
  - o Conduct daily symptom screening
  - o Enforce social distancing on transportation
  - o Provide remote learning options for students unable to be at school due to illness or exposure

## Key Changes – 5/5/2021

### [StrongSchoolsNC Public Health Toolkit \(K-12\)](#)

- Aligned guidance with CDC recommendations for routine cleaning, and disinfection only after someone is sick or diagnosed with COVID-19.
- Updated to align with indoor face covering requirements as included in Executive Order 209.
- Clarified response to person with symptoms as presumptive COVID-19 in the presence of a clinically compatible illness if not tested.

### [Reference Guide for Suspected, Presumptive, or Confirmed Cases of COVID-19 \(K-12\)](#)

- Updated to align with CDC recommendations for disinfection procedures after someone is confirmed or presumed positive with COVID-19
- Updated to align with outdoor face covering requirements as included in Executive Order 209.
- Clarified response to person with symptoms as presumptive COVID-19 in the presence of a clinically compatible illness if not tested.

### [StrongSchoolsNC Infection Control and PPE Guidance \(K-12\)](#)

- Updated to align with CDC recommendations for routine cleaning, and disinfection only after someone is sick or diagnosed with COVID-19.
- Updated to align with outdoor face covering requirements as included in Executive Order 209.

### [StrongSchoolsNC FAQ](#)

- Updated to align with CDC recommendations for routine cleaning, and disinfection only after someone is sick or diagnosed with COVID-19
- Updated to align with outdoor face covering requirements as included in Executive Order 209.
- Clarified close contact with a case as including a presumptive case in the presence of a clinically compatible illness if not tested.

### [COVID-19 Contact Tracing Procedures for K-12 Schools](#)

- General clarifying language to improve alignment with CDC guidance.

## **Key Changes – 3/24/2021**

### [StrongSchoolsNC Public Health Toolkit \(K-12\)](#)

- Clarified that daily symptom screenings can be considered for adults and are not recommended for children; Updated example symptom screening tool in alignment
- Clarified that excluding individuals based on COVID-19 symptoms still applies, and provides an updated list of symptoms aligned to CDC
- Incorporated recommendations for Plan A only that at least 3 feet of physical distance between children and 6 feet between adults; No changes to Plan B (remains 6 feet of distance required at all times)
- Replaced “Screening Flow Chart” with new “Exclusion Flow Chart”

### [Reference Guide for Suspected, Presumptive, or Confirmed Cases of COVID-19 \(K-12\)](#)

- Clarified that daily symptom screenings can be considered for adults and are not recommended for children; Updated example symptom screening tool in alignment
- Replaced “Screening Flow Chart” with new “Exclusion Flow Chart”

### [StrongSchoolsNC Infection Control and PPE Guidance \(K-12\)](#)

- Clarified that daily symptom screenings are can be considered for adults and arenot recommended for children

### [StrongSchoolsNC FAQ](#)

- Added new questions to clarify changes in symptom screening requirements

### [COVID-19 Contact Tracing Procedures for K-12 Schools](#)

- Aligned guidance with new CDC recommendations on symptom screening, physical distancing

## Key Changes – 3/23/2021

### New Resources:

- Visit <https://covid19.ncdhhs.gov/guidance#schools> to see recently updated Spanish guidance documents and check back regularly for new updates

### [StrongSchoolsNC Public Health Toolkit \(K-12\)](#)

- All grade levels can operate on Plan A
- Daily symptom screenings no longer required
- Incorporated CDC recommendations on at least 3 feet of physical distance between children and 6 feet between adults
- Changed wording from “social” to “physical” distancing
- Disinfecting playground equipment no longer required
- Physical barriers no longer recommended

### [Reference Guide for Suspected, Presumptive, or Confirmed Cases of COVID-19 \(K-12\)](#)

- All daily screening protocols upon arrival at school entry have been removed, as daily symptom screenings are no longer required
- Optional symptom screening resources found at the back of the document

### [StrongSchoolsNC Infection Control and PPE Guidance \(K-12\)](#)

- Updated to reflect optional symptom screening

### [Requirements and Recommendations for Recess, Specials, and General Activities](#)

- Revised guidance to reflect CDC recommendations on physical distance

### [StrongSchoolsNC FAQ](#)

- Revised questions to align with remote learning only being an option for high risk families and/or families who opt-out of in-person instruction
- Revised questions about symptom screenings to reflect that daily screenings are now optional
- Condensed answers to refer directly to regularly updated, linked documents

## Key Changes – 2/10/2020

### New Resources:

- [NC's K-12 contract tracing guidance](#)
- [NC's guidance on vaccine operations for K-12 schools](#)

## Key Changes – 2/2/2020

### [StrongSchoolsNC Public Health Toolkit \(K-12\)](#)

- Updated operational plan requirements to encourage schools to return to in-person instruction

### [StrongSchoolsNC FAQ](#)

- Revised questions related to which grade levels can operate under Plan A and Plan B

## Key Changes – 12/4/2020

### New Resources:

- [Antigen Testing Pilot Application Packet](#)
- [Requirements and Recommendations for Recess, Specials, and General Activities](#)
- [NCDHHS Holiday Packet – Celebrating Safely](#)

### [StrongSchoolsNC Public Health Toolkit \(K-12\)](#)

- Updated quarantine requirements to reflect new guidelines from the CDC (page 10)
- Updated the cloth face covering requirements in alignment with Executive Order No. 180, including requirements for students ages 5 and up (page 5)
- Added additional ventilation recommendations in alignment with the CDC (page 11)
- Created a glossary of terms (page 23)

### [Reference Guide for Suspected, Presumptive, or Confirmed Cases of COVID-19 \(K-12\)](#)

- Updated to reflect masking age requirements (5 and up) and updated quarantine guidance from the CDC (throughout document)

### [StrongSchoolsNC Infection Control and PPE Guidance \(K-12\)](#)

- Updated the cloth face covering requirements in alignment with Executive Order No. 180, including requirements for students ages 5 and up (page 2)

### [StrongSchoolsNC FAQ](#)

- Revised questions related to mask requirements (page 3)
- Revised questions related to quarantine requirements (page 10)
- Added questions about COVID-19 testing in schools (page 12)
- Revised vulnerable populations definition (page 12)
- Clarified and revised questions about sports and specials guidance (page 7)

## Key Changes – 11/5/2020

\*Note- Files were posted online on 11/6/2020

### [StrongSchoolsNC Public Health Toolkit \(K-12\)](#)

- Streamlined the daily symptom screening checklists (Pages 15 – 18)

- Revised alternate diagnosis language to allow someone excluded from school to return (Pages 9 and 21)
- Clarified language regarding PCR testing; now reads “PCR/molecular test” (throughout)
- Gloves are not required for people conducting symptom screenings (Page 8)
- Aligned high-risk status categories to current CDC recommendations (Page 6)
- Added consideration for protective layering if sustaining contact with unmasked persons (Page 6)

#### [Reference Guide for Suspected, Presumptive, or Confirmed Cases of COVID-19 \(K-12\)](#)

- Created new “Return from Exclusion Summary Tool” (Page 8)
- Added daily symptom screening checklists for reference (Pages 4 -7)
- Clarified language regarding PCR testing; now reads “PCR/molecular” (throughout)

#### [StrongSchoolsNC Infection Control and PPE Guidance \(K-12\)](#)

- Added broader recommendations for how to use common infection control items (Pages 1 – 3)
- Revised Starter Pack and Booster Pack descriptions to reflect past-tense (Pages 3 – 5)

#### [Considerations For COVID-19 Testing of Adults and Children Who Work at or Attend a K-12 School](#)

- Linked to new antigen testing flow chart (Page 1)

#### [What Are We Learning About COVID-19 and Children?](#)

- Updated broken links

#### [StrongSchoolsNC FAQ](#)

- Added new questions relating to immunizations and mask exceptions
- Updated broken links

## **Key Changes – 10/8/2020**

#### **New Resources:**

- [Considerations For COVID-19 Testing of Adults and Children Who Work at or Attend a K-12 School](#)
- [When to Quarantine \(Spanish\)](#)

#### [StrongSchoolsNC Public Health Toolkit \(K-12\)](#)

- Clarified what is required for schools to report to Local Health Departments: suspected or confirmed cases.
- Added language about excluding siblings/household members that are close contacts of a symptomatic person
- Added links to quarantine example calendars
- Clarified language regarding Plan B bus restrictions following request from NC State Board of Education and Department of Public Instruction
- Added links to quarantine example calendars
- Clarified screening flow chart language regarding antigen vs. PCR testing

#### [Reference Guide for Suspected, Presumptive, or Confirmed Cases of COVID-19 \(K-12\)](#)

- Language and protocol clarifications throughout document
- Clarified what is required for schools to report to Local Health Departments: suspected or confirmed cases.
- Added language about excluding siblings/household members if one individual is symptomatic or exposed, which reflects the screening form
- Added links to quarantine example calendars
- Clarified screening flow chart language regarding antigen vs. PCR testing

### [StrongSchoolsNC Infection Control and PPE Guidance \(K-12\)](#)

- Link added to CDC do-not-use list of hand sanitizer products contaminated with methanol

### [StrongSchoolsNC FAQ](#)

- New FAQs added:
  - Exposure guidance for those doing COVID-19 screenings
  - Confidentiality
  - Social distancing protocols under Plan A
  - Parental consent and COVID-19 testing
- Updates
  - Wording and question order clarity throughout document

## **Key Changes – 9/17/2020**

### [StrongSchoolsNC Public Health Toolkit \(K-12\)](#)

- As of October 5, 2020, elementary schools (K – 5<sup>th</sup> grade) can operate under Plan A.
- At this time, middle and high schools (6<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade) may operate under Plan B or Plan C, only.
- It is strongly recommended schools operate transportation under Plan B health and safety requirements to ensure reduced density in a more confined space.
- It is strongly encouraged that if schools implement plan A, they also implement and emphasize *recommended* strategies in the StrongSchoolsNC Public Health Toolkit for social distancing and minimizing exposure like choosing to cohort students and teachers.
- Clarified that symptom screenings should take place daily

### [Reference Guide for Suspected, Presumptive, or Confirmed Cases of COVID-19 \(K-12\)](#)

- Updated screening flow chart with grammatical and wording changes for clarity

### [StrongSchoolsNC FAQ](#)

- Updated answers to 4 questions to align with newly announced option for K-5 to transition to Plan A:
  - Why are elementary (K – 5<sup>th</sup> grade) schools able to choose to operate under Plan A, while middle and high (6<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade) schools cannot?
  - Are face coverings/masks required at all times for North Carolina’s students, teachers, and staff when school buildings reopen
  - Which operational plan will my child’s school reopen under?
  - Are school districts allowed to provide remote learning during the 2020-21 school year?
- Updated miscellaneous grammatical and wording changes to align with Toolkit

## **Key Changes – 9/1/2020**

### [StrongSchoolsNC Public Health Toolkit \(K-12\)](#)

- Updated wording changes to align with child care guidance
- Inserted list of mask exemptions
- Updated hyperlinks and minor language errors

### [StrongSchoolsNC FAQ](#)

- Clarified symptoms that exclude a child from in person attendance
- New FAQ added concerning financial support for families seeking school-age child care
- Updated language and responses to questions that relate to cloth face coverings and face shields, in alignment with Executive Order 163