



RIDE Rhode Island
Department
of Education

August 24, 2020

Dear Local Education Agency Leader,

On behalf of Governor Gina M. Raimondo, the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) team, and the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH), we want to thank you for your partnership in preparing for a safe and successful reopening of schools this fall. The work done by Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to develop thoughtful and comprehensive reopening plans has been tremendous.

Under Governor Raimondo's leadership, the State is committed to providing public schools across Rhode Island with critical public health supports to limit or prevent the spread of COVID-19. However, for those supports to be effective, LEAs will need to coordinate very closely with RIDOH and RIDE over the coming months. To help ensure this effective collaboration, we have prepared the attached *School-Based Testing & Case Investigation Preparation Guidance* document. This document outlines the critical steps that LEAs need to take in the areas of:

- COVID-19 Testing,
- Protocols for symptomatic people, and
- Case investigations and contact tracing

The [*PK-12 Playbook*](#) that was released on August 7, 2020 provides detailed public health protocols that should support your planning in these areas. This document will be updated as needed on [ReopeningRI.com](https://reopeningri.com)¹. The team at RIDE and RIDOH look forward to working with you over the coming weeks to achieve our shared goals of keeping school communities healthy, safe and learning.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "A. Infante-Green".

Angélica Infante-Green
Commissioner, Rhode Island Department of Education

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nicole Alexander Scott".

Nicole Alexander Scott, MD, MPH
Director, Rhode Island Department of Health

School-Based Testing & Case Investigation Preparation Guidance

Roles and Responsibilities for LEAs

Issued: 8/24/2020

Testing

The State of Rhode Island will coordinate testing for all symptomatic public-school students and staff along with the close contacts and classmates of any student or staff who tests positive for COVID-19. To assist the State in doing this work, LEAs are expected to do the following:

Permission to test	Schools should collect authorization/consent forms to test students, in accordance with RIDOH public health protocols, from all parents/guardians. Please use the authorization form found here . Parents and guardians should be asked to complete the form prior to 9/25/2020. The form will be available starting on August 31 st , 2020.
Collection of insurance information	Schools should collect health insurance information from students to facilitate 3rd party payment for testing. Students/staff should <i>not</i> be charged any co-payments/deductibles for testing per state and federal guidance. This information should be kept centrally so it can be provided to RIDOH quickly as part of testing activities. This information can be collected through the same form found here . Parents and guardians should be asked to complete the form prior to 9/25/2020. Lack of insurance coverage will never stop someone from receiving a test.
School nurse testing	Over time, some school nurses or other trained school staff may start obtaining specimens (swabs) for COVID-19 testing or supervise the self-collection of specimens of students and staff, as needed. Should this start happening, schools will be provided with adequate swabbing supplies, including PPE. If your district is interested in having nurses or other staff support timely testing in this manner, please indicate that to RIDOH by sending your school nurses' names and contact information to Linda.Mendonca@health.ri.gov .

Protocols for Symptomatic People

Having a space (or spaces) where people who are exhibiting the symptoms of COVID-19 can safely isolate is critical to preventing the spread of COVID-19. To ensure that safe isolation can happen, LEAs are expected to do the following:

Isolation of symptomatic students	Schools should have and follow clear protocols for the isolation of students who exhibit COVID-19 symptoms during the school day while they wait to be picked up by their parents/guardians. Schools should have space and protocols for multiple symptomatic students to be isolated separately.
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Case Investigation and Contact Tracing

Through case investigation and contact tracing, RIDOH gives guidance to people confirmed to have COVID-19 and identifies and notifies their close contacts to provide instructions and supports for quarantine. Effective case investigation and contact tracing help prevent the spread of COVID-19. These processes will require close partnership between RIDOH, RIDE, and LEAs. RIDOH and RIDE have developed processes to aid in case investigation and contact tracing as they relate to public PK-12 settings. To assist in case investigations and contact tracing, LEAs are expected to do the following:

Probable case reporting	When a student or staff member at school presents with a symptom or set of symptoms meeting the CDC definition of a probable case of COVID-19 (as defined in the PK-12 playbook ¹) the school should report the probable case via RIDOH’s newly-established “Probable Reporting Portal,” which will go live by 9/9. School staff should educate the individual and/or their family that a COVID-19 test is required for those meeting the probable case definition. Note that except in special circumstances, RIDOH will not begin the case investigation process or contact the LEA until there is a positive test result. The Probable Reporting Portal will be used for broader scale system monitoring.
Assistance with case investigation	<p>In addition to the point of contact identified in your reopening plan, each school should have a designated point of contact and a back-up contact for assistance with case investigations. You will receive a request to provide this information from RIDE.</p> <p>When RIDOH initiates a case investigation of a student or staff member associated with a school, a RIDOH Case Investigator will contact the school to gather information about individuals who might have come into close contact (within 6 feet for more than 15 minutes) with the person who tested positive.</p>

¹ https://reopeningri.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/2020-08-08_K-12-Playbook_edited_v1.pdf?189db0&189db0. Please refer to the latest version found on reopeningRI.com.

	<p>The school’s identified contact(s) will work with RIDOH Case Investigators and help answer critical questions like the ones below. Whenever possible, please prepare the answers to these questions in advance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was the individual in a stable pod at school? • How does the student get to school? If on a bus, is there a consistent seating arrangement? • When was the individual last physically in the school/on the bus? • Review classroom seating charts to determine which other students sit closest to the student (e.g. if seated at desks – who is seated immediately in front, next to, and immediately behind)? • Have these classes maintained consistent seating arrangements? Were there any activities that might have created conditions for close exposure (within 6 feet for more than 15 minutes)? • Aside from classroom teachers, are there any other staff who might have interacted closely with the individual (e.g. support services, floating teachers, administrative staff)? • What do transitions at your school look like? How closely do line arrangements match seating arrangements? • Is the student or staff member involved in extracurricular activities such as clubs or sports, or aftercare and before school care? Do those activities have consistent pods and seating or practice arrangements? • How is bathroom usage managed at your school? How often are bathrooms and other common areas cleaned and disinfected? • How is lunch time managed at your school? • Are there times when children from different pods are mixing? • Are there times when staff are mixing closely in one space (e.g. teacher workroom)?
<p>Contact information for potential contacts</p>	<p>Schools should ensure information in the student information system is up to date. Consider requesting and validating contact information for students and their parents/guardians at least twice a semester.</p> <p>The Case Investigator will rely on information entered in the student information system, specifically attendance and contact information, in the course of their investigation. Schools should ensure that this information is accurate to support the most effective case investigation and contact tracing process.</p>
<p>Implementation of public health guidance</p>	<p>Schools should implement any quarantine, isolation, or cleaning protocols directed by RIDOH through the case investigation process.</p>
<p>Coordinated communications</p>	<p>RIDOH will provide schools with templates and guidance during the case investigation process for communicating information about positive cases to the wider school community (all parents, staff, and</p>

	students), as well as separate guidance for students and staff who were not close contacts of the individual who tested positive, but who were part of the same classroom. Schools will be expected to communicate with students and families whenever there is a case of COVID in the school (although multiple cases may be rolled into a single communication). The school should also reinforce RIDOH's direct messaging to students, staffs, and families.
Return to school protocols	RIDOH Case Investigators will communicate the quarantine requirements related to a positive case along, with associated guidance on when each quarantined person will be able to return to school (for both classroom and individual quarantine). Schools will be asked to ensure that people who have been asked to quarantine do not return to school before the end of their quarantine. For more information about quarantine protocols, please refer to the PK-12 playbook . ¹