

MEMORANDUM

TO: Superintendents, Principals, Independent School Heads
FROM: Daniel M. French, Ed.D. *DMF*
SUBJECT: Contact Tracing Process Update for Vermont Schools
DATE: November 13, 2020

Process Change for Contact Tracing: Communication with Families

The Vermont Department of Health is implementing a process change in situations where:

- there is a positive case that was at school (PreK-12) while infectious, **and**
- the Health Department recommendation is for the entire pod or classroom to quarantine.

In these situations, school administrators will be asked to communicate directly with teachers, staff and families of the pod or classroom to provide them with quarantine guidance. The Health Department will provide template language for these communications and detailed information on the start of quarantine (Day 0), the end of quarantine (Day 14) and Day 7 testing dates (should individuals with no symptoms choose to test out of quarantine at Day 7 or after). The Health Department will be available to answer any questions that families have about this quarantine guidance and will assist families in accessing services and supports, if needed.

The following will not change:

- Health Department-trained case investigators will continue to conduct a thorough interview with anyone who tests positive.
- A Health Department rapid response team will continue to conduct meetings with school administration to discuss infection prevention, work with them to identify close contacts to develop line lists, and make public health recommendations.
- The Health Department will be an ongoing resource for schools and families throughout the process.

Process Change Rationale and Benefits

This change is being implemented to further increase the capacity of Health Department Contact Tracing but has many additional benefits.

- The new process ensures that quarantine guidance is provided as rapidly as possible. In a number of the situations that have already occurred, schools have wanted to be the first to contact families, which has slowed down the process of sharing quarantine

guidance. This new plan will enable schools to provide immediate and proactive communication to families with clear guidance on what actions families should take.

- The new process allows the Case Follow Up team to focus on contact tracing with teachers and other staff, which is generally more complex and takes additional time.
- Schools already have well-worked systems in place to communicate with families, and families are likely to be more responsive to these messages from the school than to messages from the Health Department via unrecognized phone numbers.
- This process will provide families with information in writing from a trusted source.
- This model is already successfully in place and works well for health care facilities and several other situations.