



Date: January 4, 2022

To: Local Health Departments, School districts, Congregate Care Settings, Healthcare Providers

**Interim Updated Isolation & Quarantine Guidance**

**Please distribute immediately to:**

Communicable Disease Control, Commissioner or Public Health Director, School district administrators, School nurses, Congregate Care setting directors

**This is interim guidance. CDC guidance is in flux and will be reviewed by NYSDOH as it is released. Additional requirements may be added.**

**Background**

New York State is experiencing record numbers of COVID-19 cases and extremely high hospitalizations ([New York State COVID-19 data](#)) that are stressing healthcare system and public health response capacity.

On December 24, 2021, in the face of these record cases and worker shortages, New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) issued guidance for [Shortened Isolation](#) for healthcare workers and essential workers.

On December 27, 2021 CDC issued updated recommendations for isolation and quarantine for the general population in the form of a press release entitled "[CDC Updates and Shortens Recommended Isolation and Quarantine Period for General Population](#)". In subsequent communications CDC has indicated that additional guidance is forthcoming related to isolation and quarantine for the general population as well as recommendations for certain special settings, such as schools, higher education, and congregate living settings.

**New York State Department of Health Recommendations**

After careful consideration of the limited evidence available to inform recommendations as well as the practical realities of pandemic response under the current circumstances, NYSDOH is aligning with CDC's updated isolation and quarantine recommendations. This supersedes the essential worker portion of the December 24 [Shortened Isolation](#) guidance, although the portion of that guidance for healthcare workers remains in effect.

Therefore, NYSDOH makes the following recommendations:

- For isolation and quarantine of the general population, follow the CDC recommendations ([CDC Updates and Shortens Recommended Isolation and Quarantine Period for General Population](#)) as follows:
  - Isolate for 5 days, where day 0 is the day of symptom onset or (if asymptomatic) the day of collection of the first positive specimen.

- If asymptomatic at the end of 5 days or if symptoms are resolving, isolation ends and the individual should wear a well-fitting mask while around others for an additional 5 days.
    - Individuals who are moderately-severely immunocompromised should continue to follow standard (i.e., not shortened) [Isolation Guidance](#).
    - Individuals who are unable to wear a well-fitting mask for 5 days after a 5-day isolation should also follow standard (i.e., not shortened) [Isolation Guidance](#).
  - If exposed to COVID-19, quarantine as follows, where day 0 is the last date of exposure:
    - If not fully vaccinated or fully vaccinated and eligible for a booster but not yet boosted, quarantine for 5 days and wear a well-fitting mask while around others for an additional 5 days.
    - If fully vaccinated and boosted (with the booster at least 2 weeks before the first date of exposure) or not yet eligible for a booster, no quarantine is required but these individuals should wear a well-fitting mask while around others for 10 days after the last date of exposure.
    - If possible, test at day 5 with either a nucleic acid amplification test (NAAT, e.g., PCR) or antigen test.
    - If symptoms appear, quarantine and seek testing. In this situation, quarantine would end when the test is negative. If testing is not done, isolate according to the guidance above.
- Additional guidance from CDC for schools is expected in coming days. NYSDOH will review that guidance when it becomes available. For the time being, schools should follow current NYS school guidance regarding school attendance unless the local health department (LHD) issues alternative guidance. In the event the LHD issues alternative guidance, adhere to the LHD guidance for the school community.
- Additional guidance from CDC for congregate care settings is expected in coming days. NYSDOH will review that guidance when it becomes available. Many congregate care settings are at high risk for rapid transmission and/or poor outcomes.
  - Congregate care settings include corrections, shelters, childcare, and group homes and other residential care settings not included in healthcare guidance.
  - Congregate [healthcare](#) settings should follow NYSDOH guidance for healthcare personnel return to work [here](#) and [here](#).
  - Other congregate care settings should follow guidance issued by the LHD or, if none:
    - In the absence of staff shortages, continue to follow standard (i.e., not shortened) guidance for return-to-work for infected or exposed personnel for the setting.
    - In staff shortage situations, as defined by an inability to provide essential services as determined by the entity, such congregate living settings may allow infected or exposed staff to return to work based on the durations for general population isolation and quarantine above.
- Note that work restrictions (if an individual works in healthcare or a congregate care setting as above) or school attendance requirements (depending on LHD guidance) for an individual might be different from isolation or quarantine requirements for that individual. Work restrictions pertain to only when the individual may return to work; isolation or quarantine requirements pertain to the individual's other day-to-day activities in the community.
- As more information becomes available about appropriate isolation and quarantine durations with the Omicron variant, and as formal CDC guidance becomes available, NYSDOH will evaluate and update State guidance accordingly.