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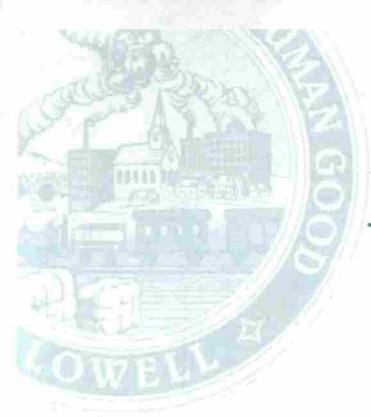
Health Department Protocols for Positive or Close Contact for COVID Cases in Schools

In order to enhance communication between the Health Department and the School Department we want to explain in some detail how we evaluate each case and conduct the contact tracing.

The protocol that has been set up by the School Department is that when a faculty or staff member tests positive, they will call their Principal and the Lowell Health Department to report their positive test result. The Principal will then call Human Resources to report the positive case. If the case is a student then the parent should notify the School Nurse and the Lowell Health Department. The School Nurse will notify the Principal and then he/she will follow the school protocol that is in place. This process is the same if the staff, faculty member, or student is identified as a close contact to a case.

The Health Department will assess each case individually as each case has its own nuances. If the situation involves a faculty or staff member the Public Health Nurse will speak to them and determine if he/she is a Lowell resident and where our authority lies. If they are not a Lowell resident we will coordinate with the jurisdiction where the person resides. We will also get information to determine possible exposure of others within their school building or office setting, and we will work with the appropriate personnel in that building to determine close contacts and quarantine guidance. A positive case or close contact will have to be released from their Local Health Department in their jurisdiction where they reside in order to re-enter the community as a staff member. A letter of documentation that they have been cleared should be provided to that person by the local Health Department or the Community Tracing Collaborative.

If the situation involves a student, the protocol we follow will be similar to that of a staff or faculty member with the exception that the Health Department will be speaking to a parent or guardian. Students will also need a letter of clearance from the Lowell Health Department in order to return to school. This can be provided to the parent or guardian.



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In all cases, using the information we receive from the school we will endeavor to make a decision on isolation (of a positive) or quarantine (of a close contact) as soon as possible, understanding the immediacy of being in a school setting. However, it is important to remember that information gathered during tracing investigation may change the initial guidance that was put forth. Contact tracing is an investigatory process which once completed, can change the course of action. Schools need to be aware of this and have the ability to pivot and make adjustments to the previous plan that was put in place.

School Department employees, without consultation from the Health Department, should not be requiring students or staff to isolate, quarantine, or test, as they have no regulatory authority to do this. This authority lies with Public Health.

This is a Novel Coronavirus and we have not been faced with anything like this before. We are all learning as we navigate through these uncertain times. As we continue to learn about the virus, guidance and protocols from State and Federal experts have and will change. Together we will keep our school community safe.

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