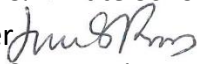




COUNTY OF DUTCHESS
DEPARTMENT OF BEHAVIORAL & COMMUNITY HEALTH

MEMORANDUM

To: Dutchess County Public School Superintendents & Private Schools
From: Livia Santiago-Rosado, MD FACEP, Commissioner 
Dutchess County Department of Behavioral and Community Health
Date: January 14, 2022
RE: Contact Tracing Changes for Schools

With the announcement of the decision by New York State to move away from formal contact identification and tracing, and towards individual responsibility for isolating and quarantining, yesterday the State issued additional guidance related specifically to schools. This change reflects the current diminished value of contact tracing due to the high prevalence of disease; when omicron is so prevalent in the community, the assumption is there is widespread exposure via multiple channels. As a result, the shift in strategy requires:

- **those who know they are positive to isolate themselves**
- **symptomatic individuals self-isolate and obtain timely testing** to determine if they have been infected with COVID-19
- if they test positive, **informing their known close contacts**, and
- for **those who learn they are contacts, self-quarantining** as appropriate.

As we adopt the latest guidance, Dutchess County DBCH will cease formal contact tracing efforts for the general population, including schools. Orders of quarantine will not be issued by the County or by schools on the County's behalf. Instead, individuals who learn they have been exposed will be expected to complete their own New York State Quarantine Self-Attestation and engage in a testing strategy so they may still attend school. Schools will no longer provide line lists to DBCH or NYS DOH for entry into CommCare but will continue reporting positive cases to NYS as required.

Per the NYS guidance, schools should continue to inform students and families of potential exposures: "When known close contact with someone who tested positive for or has symptoms of COVID-19 occurs on the school campus, for example, in a classroom, schools should at least notify parents and guardians of affected students. Exposed individuals should be referred to information provided by the state or local health department and should follow the quarantine guidance..." Please see the attached sample 'Dear Parent' letter that may be a useful resource.

Individuals who need to quarantine should use the New York State Quarantine Self-Attestation form and are encouraged to engage in Test-To-Stay so they may still attend school during the

school day. Note that testing strategies are not to be used for participation in extracurricular activities as this is inconsistent with quarantine guidance.

In summary, current school guidance emphasizes, and depends on, personal responsibility to contain the spread. During this period of transition, we again thank our school partners for their diligence, flexibility, and dedication. Please reach out with any questions.