



Kathleen E. Toomey, M.D., M.P.H., Commissioner

Brian Kemp, Governor

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dph.ga.gov

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Dear Superintendents and School Administrators:

Thank you for all you are doing to keep schools safe and open.

We have become aware of some confusion about the expected procedures for case reporting, contact tracing, and quarantine of students. Communication about cases and coordination of follow-up with parents and staff are to be carried out in partnership with your District Public Health office. We stand ready to support you in these efforts to minimize challenges, and to provide in-school staff for contact tracing if necessary.

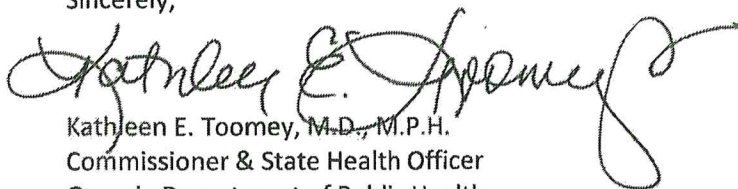
While the Administrative Order permits schools to implement modified quarantine requirements for children exposed in the school setting, DPH strongly recommends that schools choosing to use this flexibility to allow in-school quarantine require the exposed individual to use a mask for the short time the individual is in school until his or her quarantine period is completed. This is consistent with the guidance for critical infrastructure workers, which was successfully used in other situations. Regardless of your general masking recommendations, DPH strongly recommends that schools' modified quarantine plans require masking during the time of quarantine to ensure the safety of children and staff in the schools and reduce the spread of COVID-19 that we have already seen in the schools statewide. If masking is unacceptable, then DPH recommends standard at-home quarantine be required.

Our goal is to continue in-person learning throughout Georgia while working to ensure a safe school environment with flexibility where possible. We have already seen that following the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidance as closely as is possible and requiring masking as part of a modified quarantine plan offers the safest path forward for schools to remain open without outbreaks or quarantines.

Thank you for your support. The enclosed letter from the State Epidemiologist outlines the expectations and alternatives in more detail.

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Kathleen E. Toomey, M.D., M.P.H.
Commissioner & State Health Officer
Georgia Department of Public Health