



To: Local Health Departments and K-12 School Superintendents
From: Dr. Bruce Vanderhoff, MD, MBA, Director, Ohio Department of Health
Date: Jan. 26, 2022
Subject: Contact Tracing and Case Investigation Statement

As COVID-19 has evolved, public health mitigation strategies have had to adjust periodically to address new challenges. The quick spread of the Omicron variant and its rapid clinical course have made universal contact tracing, case investigation and exposure notification impractical when combined with newly reduced timelines for quarantine and isolation.

Therefore, effective immediately:

- The Ohio Department of Health recommends that local health departments (LHDs) shift from universal contact tracing, case investigation and exposure notification to a cluster- or outbreak-based model. This strategy prioritizes people in high-risk settings, such as congregate residential settings (e.g., shelters, correctional facilities, and nursing homes) or for certain circumstances such as outbreaks or clusters in specific settings or in relation to initial cases or clusters associated with new variants, as appropriate.
- Schools may discontinue universal contact tracing but are expected to assist LHDs with contact tracing, case investigation and exposure notification related to outbreaks or clusters in schools as determined by the LHD. K-12 schools should continue to follow ODH's protocol, "[Mask to Stay, Test to Play](#)," and allow asymptomatic students to attend school while wearing a mask if they have been exposed to someone with COVID-19. The best place for kids is in school, in-person, full-time.
- ODH also will change the school case reporting cadence to weekly. Schools should report positive student and staff cases to their LHDs by close of business on Fridays. LHDs will continue to report on the same weekly cadence. This schedule will begin on Friday, Feb. 4. ODH will continue to evaluate related school reporting requirements.

LHDs should continue providing education and messaging to the general public about steps to take after exposure or a positive test. The attached [flow chart](#) may be shared with the public to explain how they should proceed after testing positive for COVID-19 or being exposed to someone who has COVID-19.

This is also a good time to remind the public of mitigation strategies that work against transmission of COVID-19 and other infectious diseases:

- Please encourage people to stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccinations, including booster doses. COVID-19 vaccines and boosters are the best prevention tool we have against severe illness and death.
- Reinforce the importance of mask wearing, physical distancing, improving ventilation, hand washing, cough etiquette, testing, and staying home if you are sick.