March 1, 2022

As many of you are aware, on Friday, February 25, 2022 the Centers for Disease (CDC) Control announced a new classification for "Community Levels" of COVID risk which is based on three measures:

- Hospitalizations with COVID,
- Hospital bed availability, and
- New COVID cases.

It is no longer the CDC's recommendation that masks be required in areas with a *low* or *medium* community rate. Community rates may be found here.

In light of the amended guidance issued by CDC, NY Governor Hochul announced that effective Wednesday, March 2, 2022 masks will no longer be mandated in schools and child care facilities.

Additionally, based on the most recent guidance issued by NYS DOH and by the CDC related to school age children and child care settings, the Office of Children and Family Services will no longer require mask be worn in child care programs as of March 2, 2022, unless the following apply:

- Regardless of vaccination status, anyone who has had close contact with someone with COVID-19 **must** wear a mask for ten (10) days.
- Anyone returning to school after a five (5) day exclusion, due to an exposure to COVID or testing positive for COVID, **must** wear a mask on days 6-10.

Therefore, mask will be optional at Newmeadow with the exceptions as noted above.

Please keep in mind that students, staff, and visitors **may choose** to wear masks and under no circumstances are they to be made uncomfortable for doing so. If you would like your student to continue wearing a mask while at school please notify the classroom teacher via Brightwheel.

We will send additional information on any changes to other current protocols and mitigation strategies as it becomes available. In the meantime, all such strategies will remain in place. Please continue to report any positive cases of COVID-19 to the COVID Coordinator at rgrugnale@newmeadow.org and to your local County Public Health Services.

I want to thank you again for your patience, understanding, and support as we have navigated through this pandemic. This has been a long, difficult journey and I am so proud of how well our students, families, and staff have worked together throughout it all.

Stacey Cornell
Executive Director

Newmeadow, Inc. will use the following protocols when allowing students to return to school if they have symptoms of COVID-19, test positive for COVID-19 or are considered exposed to an individual with COVID-19. These protocols are based on the most recent updates applicable to Newmeadow, Inc. Please know that this information is subject to change at any time. If you have any questions or concerns about COVID-19 testing or other health and safety protocols, please do not hesitate to contact Ramona Grugnale, COVID Coordinator, at rgrugnale@newmeadow.org.

Illness

If a student has COVID-19 symptoms whether or not there is a known exposure:

Symptoms include fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, or diarrhea.

- **They must receive a negative COIVD-19 test OR have a doctor's note to return**
    - *Acceptable test: must have a lab negative NAAT **(PCR)**, lab antigen test **(RAPID)**, or **two negative Over-the-Counter** (i.e., at-home or take-home) antigen tests taken 36 hours apart*
        - *Parents/guardians presenting the school with two negative Over-the-Counter antigen tests, must also submit the "AFFIRMATION OF OVER THE COUNTER (OTC) COVID-19 ANTIGEN TEST RESULT".*

    - ***There is no exemption to the testing requirement for symptomatic students unless:***
        - *a healthcare provider makes a diagnosis of a confirmed non-COVID-19 acute illness (e.g., laboratory-confirmed influenza or strep throat, etc.) AND COVID-19 is not suspected, then a note signed by the healthcare provider explaining the alternate diagnosis may be provided to allow the student to participate in school without COVID-19 testing.*

- **If the test is negative AND symptoms are improving they may return to school so long as they are well enough to:**
    - *Participate in school;*
    - *Have a mild to no runny nose;*
    - *Have no more than an infrequent, nonproductive cough that is not getting worse; and*
    - *Be fever-free for 24 hours without use of fever-reducing medications.*

- **If a student tests positive for COVID-19, please follow isolation guidelines below.**

Exposure and Quarantine

*Regardless of vaccination status, anyone who has had close contact with someone with COVID-19 **must wear a mask for ten (10) days.***

If a student has been exposed to COVID-19:
- If a student is **vaccinated** (up-to-date on their COVID vaccinations), as defined by the CDC; **or**
- **had confirmed COVID-19 within the past 90 days (tested positive using a viral test):**
    - They **will not** be excluded from school unless symptoms develop.
        - If symptoms develop, **DO NOT REPORT TO SCHOOL**, get tested immediately and isolate until results are received.
            - If results are **negative** and symptoms are improving they may return to school provided they meet the illness guidance above.
            - If results are **positive**, please follow the isolation guidance below.
    - They **MUST** wear a well-fitted mask for a **full ten (10) days**.
    - Testing is encouraged on day 5 but not required.

- If a student **is not vaccinated**, they **will be excluded** from school and should quarantine for at least five days after their last close contact with an individual with COVID-19.
    - For example:
        - Day 0: Date of exposure.
        - Day 1 through Day 5: Stay home
        - Day 6: Return to school if they are not experiencing symptoms **and** if they are able to **consistently wear a well-fitting face mask. Masks must be worn at school for days 6-10**. *Any student who cannot reliably (consistently and accurately) wear a well-fitting mask on days 6-10 for any reason, MUST remain out of school for a full 10 days. They may return to school after 10 days provided they are not experiencing symptoms.*
        - If symptoms develop, **DO NOT REPORT TO SCHOOL**, get tested immediately and isolate until results are received.
            - If results are **negative** and symptoms are improving they may return to school so long as they meet the illness guidelines above.
            - If results are **positive**, please follow the isolation guidance below

Positive Case and Isolation

If a student tests positive for COVID-19:

- **Regardless of vaccination status**, if a student tests positive for COVID-19 at any time, including following an exposure, they **will be** excluded from school and should isolate for a least a full five days.
    - For example:
        - Day 0: Symptom onset **or** tested positive.
        - Day 1 through Day 5: Stay home
        - Day 6: Return to school:
            - If they can **consistently wear a well-fitting face mask for days 6-10 (mask required for days 6-10),**
              AND
            - remains asymptomatic; **OR**
            - if symptomatic **must** be fever-free for 24 hours without fever-reducing medication **and** symptoms **must** be improving.
                - Not have a runny nose severe enough to make mask wearing difficult.
                - Have no more than an infrequent, nonproductive cough that is not getting worse and doesn't make mask wearing difficult.
                - Have no nausea, diarrhea or vomiting for at least 24 hours.
- ** PLEASE NOTE: Any student who cannot reliably (consistently and accurately) wear a well-fitting mask on days 6-10 for any reason, who has tested positive for COVID-19, MUST stay out of school for a <u>full 10 days.</u>*
- Positive Over-the-Counter (i.e., at-home, take-home) antigen test results should be reported to the local department of health.
- Anyone hospitalized with COVID-19 or immunocompromised must isolate for at least 10-days and consult with a doctor before returning to school.

Additional quarantine and isolation information can be found on your local county department of health website, as well as the New York State Department of Health and CDC websites.

- Schenectady County
- Albany County
- Saratoga County
- Warren County
- Washington County
- New York State Department of Health
- Centers for Disease Control (CDC)

Thank you for your continued partnership as we work to keep our students and staff healthy, and our students in school. If you have any questions or concerns about COVID-19 testing or other health and safety protocols, please do not hesitate to contact Ramona Grugnale, COVID Coordinator, at rgrugnale@newmeadow.org.