



COVID-19 Student and Family Guidelines

Health Considerations for Navigating COVID-19

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Introduction

The Goodhue County Education District (GCED) is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for our students, staff and their families. To ensure this commitment is met, we have developed and will continue to revise the COVID-19 Guidance for Students and Families in response to the everchanging Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic.

In addition, this document incorporates COVID-19 related health recommendations from [CDC: Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools](#) as well as Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) guidelines for [Best Practice Recommendations for COVID-19 Prevention in Schools for the 2021-22 School Year](#), MDH's [Schools and Childcare: COVID-19](#) and MDH's [Recommended COVID-19 Decision Tree for People in Youth, Student, and Child Care Programs](#). GCED administrators, COVID-19 Response Team, School Board, and county partners continuously monitor for new guidelines or modifications to current guidelines and are committed to applying those recommendations in a timely manner.

School Year 2021-2022

Students benefit from in-person learning, and safely returning to school in fall 2021 is a priority. GCED will use MDH's [Best Practice Recommendations for COVID-19 Prevention in Schools for the 2021-22 School Year](#) and [CDC's Schools and Child Care Programs: Plan, Prepare, and Respond](#) as the guiding resources during the 2021-2022 school year. We will also closely monitor community case rates of COVID-19 and community vaccination rates in our safe learning plan decisions. Although the recommendations specify K-12 guidance, because GCED services extend from birth through age 21, we will extend these recommendations to include all services offered from birth to age 21.

About COVID-19

[COVID-19](#) is a respiratory illness in people caused by a new (novel) virus. COVID-19 is primarily spread from person to person from respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks.

You can become infected by coming into prolonged (more than 15 minutes total over 24 hours) close contact (about 6 feet) with a person who has COVID-19. Some people without symptoms may be able to spread the virus. You may also be able to get it by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it, and then by touching your mouth, nose or eyes. [COVID-19 symptoms](#) can range from mild to severe illness. Since this is a new virus, there are still things we do not know, but we are learning more about COVID-19 each day.

Minnesota's public health community is working to [slow the spread of COVID-19](#) in our state, and we count on all of our students, staff and their families to be part of that process. Our goal is to reduce the

potential for transmission of COVID-19 in our schools and communities, and that calls on all of us to do what we can to achieve our common goal of returning students to in-person learning.

Individuals at Higher Risk and Extended Absences

GCED cares about the health and safety of our students and staff and has an obligation to provide a strong educational system that effectively supports students, staff and the community. [Some students may need to take extra precautions](#) or may be at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19, such as [people with underlying medical conditions](#). Parents/guardians may want to consider the 5RiverOnline School (5RO) as an alternative for grades K-12. [5RiversOnline](#) is a new school offering full-time online instruction. 5RO will address the same state standards as each of the schools in Goodhue County. 5RO's development was at the request and was designed in partnership with our member district schools Cannon Falls, Goodhue, Kenyon-Wanamingo, Lake City, Red Wing and Zumbrota-Mazeppa. 5RO students also have access to extracurricular and athletic activities in their resident district.

Protect Yourself and Others: Prevention Strategies

GCED takes precautionary measures and follows guidance from the CDC and MDH in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This plan is grounded in the knowledge that the benefits of being physically present in school are significant, and creating conditions for safe in-person instruction is a priority.

Therefore, this guidance emphasizes implementing layered prevention strategies (using multiple prevention strategies together consistently) to help limit the spread of COVID-19, to support in-person learning, and to protect people who are not fully vaccinated, including students, teachers, staff and other members of their households, especially in areas of moderate-to-high community transmission. MDH, in alignment with current scientific evidence and guidance from CDC, strongly recommends vaccination for those ages 12 and older, wearing masks, social/physical distancing, COVID-19 testing, proper ventilation, handwashing and respiratory etiquette, staying home when sick and getting tested, contact tracing in combination with quarantine and isolation, and cleaning and disinfection to keep schools safe.

According to the CDC, the best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus. You can take steps to slow the spread and [protect yourself and others](#). Key prevention strategies include:

- Promoting COVID-19 vaccination
- Consistent and correct mask use
- Physical distancing and cohorts
- COVID-19 testing
- Handwashing and respiratory etiquette
- Staying home when sick and getting tested

- Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine
- Cleaning and disinfecting our facilities regularly

While fewer children overall have become seriously ill with COVID-19 than adults, children can be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19, get sick with COVID-19, spread the virus to others, and have severe outcomes. [Recent studies](#) have shown that:

- when community rates of COVID-19 are high, especially with lower vaccination rates for those eligible for vaccination, there is an increased likelihood that COVID-19 will be introduced to, and potentially transmitted by, students in school settings
- when prevention strategies are layered and implemented consistently, transmission within schools can be limited
- children have an infection rate that is comparable to, and in some settings, higher, than adults
- children can also transmit the virus to others even when they do not have symptoms or have mild/non-specific symptoms
- compared to adults, children are more commonly asymptomatic or have mild, non-specific symptoms (e.g., headache, sore throat)

COVID-19 Vaccine

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), vaccination is currently the leading public health strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic. People who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 are at low risk of symptomatic or severe infection. [Growing evidence](#) suggests that people who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 are less likely to have an asymptomatic infection or transmit COVID-19 to others than people who are not fully vaccinated.

The CDC website shares that viruses constantly change through mutation, and new variants of a virus are expected to occur over time. New evidence suggests that an emerging variant, the Delta variant, is more contagious and that even fully vaccinated people may be able to pass the disease to others. However, the vaccines still work. Fully vaccinated people are less likely to get infected, and if a vaccinated person gets infected, the illness will likely be mild. The vaccine also greatly reduces the chance of hospitalization and death. The Delta variant is different from past versions of the virus and spreads about twice as easily from one person to another. Learn more at [About COVID-19: COVID-19 variants](#).

Visit [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov) to find out where students and their families can get vaccinated against COVID-19 in the community and promote COVID-19 vaccination locations near schools.

Resources:

- [CDC: Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools: Promoting Vaccination](#)
- [Goodhue County: Vaccine Resources and Clinics](#)
- [MDH: Vaccine Connector](#)
- [MDH: Ways to Find a COVID-19 Vaccine](#)

- [MDH: FAQ about Vaccines](#)

Masks (Face Coverings)

The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), following guidance from the CDC, has recommended everyone wear masks while inside schools this fall, even if they've been vaccinated. Each school district has the autonomy to decide whether to implement its own mandate.

Wearing a mask (face covering) has proven to be an effective strategy in slowing the transmission of COVID-19. It is important to wear a mask in some settings to help limit the spread of COVID-19. In accordance with CDC and MDH recommendations, and per School Board approval on August 26, 2021, GCED will implement a mask requirement for all students ages 2 and up, staff and visitors regardless of vaccination status at the River Bluff Education Center and at the Tower View Alternative Learning High School. In general, people do not need to wear masks outdoors. At any point during the course of 2021-22 that masks are a requirement, mask exemptions due to disabling or health related conditions will be considered on a case by case basis through an interactive process with the student or staff member or through the actions of an IEP or 504 team.

As of June 14, 2021, all people are required by the CDC to wear masks on public transportation. **This includes all GCED transportation to and from all schools and programming.**

Resources:

- [CDC: Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools: Consistent and Correct Mask Use](#)
- [CDC Video: How to Wear a Cloth Face Covering](#)
- [CDC: Requirement for Face Masks on Public Transportation Conveyances and at Transportation Hubs](#)
- [Face Covering Requirements and Recommendations](#)
- [CDC Science Brief: Community Use of Cloth Masks to Control the Spread of SARS-CoV-2](#)

Physical Distancing and Cohorting

Maintaining physical distance provides protection by reducing risk of exposure and limiting the number of close contacts when someone is infected with COVID-19. The term "physical distancing" means keeping a safe space between yourself and other people. Similarly, the practice of "cohorting," which refers to identifying small groups of students and staff and keeping them together throughout an entire day, reduces the risk of additional exposures in the school setting by limiting unnecessary mixing of multiple groups.

The CDC and American Academy of Pediatrics recommend placing student desks at least 3 feet apart at a minimum, and up to 6 feet apart in areas of high community transmission in settings where cohorting is not possible. GCED will work to provide spacing where possible between students, with a goal of 3-6 feet spacing when able. Students where possible will be assigned to small cohort groups that stay together as much as possible throughout the day (e.g., during lunch, bathroom breaks, arrival

and dismissal, recess). Assigned seating will be required in all classrooms and lunch periods for all ages.

Resources:

- [CDC: Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools: Physical Distancing](#)
- [CDC Video: Social Distancing](#)

Hand and Respiratory Hygiene

[Washing hands](#) with soap and water is the best way to get rid of germs in most situations. You can help yourself and others stay healthy by washing your hands and encouraging students to wash their hands often, especially during key times when germs are likely to spread.

GCED has built routines of hand hygiene into the daily school schedule for all students and staff. We will teach and reinforce handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and/or the safe use of hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

Resources:

- [CDC: Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools: Handwashing and Respiratory Etiquette](#)
- [MDH: Hand Hygiene for Schools and Child Care](#)
- [MDH Video: How to Wash Your Hands](#)

Cleaning and Disinfecting Measures

GCED follows guidance from MDH and the CDC to maintain a clean environment. GCED staff routinely clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that are frequently touched and have implemented an elevated cleaning procedure in response to reports of COVID-19 related symptoms and/or diagnosis. All spaces at River Bluff Education Center and Tower View are equipped with supplies to routinely clean and disinfect.

During school hours, high touch areas in classrooms such as desks, chairs, tabletops, counters, door handles, cabinet knobs/handles, light switches, white board markers, computer monitors/keyboards or any other shared equipment will be disinfected between each class. Staff will be provided with a cleaner/disinfectant and paper towels and trained on how to use the cleaner/disinfectant properly.

High touch areas outside the classrooms such as door handles, knobs, panic bars, handrails, sinks and fixtures, light switches, elevator controls (inside and out) vending machines and any other areas will be disinfected during each class time by the custodians. Custodians will be provided with cleaners/disinfectants, proper personal protective equipment and training on how to use the cleaner/disinfectant properly.

Bathrooms will be cleaned every 2 hours by custodial staff during school hours. Custodians will be provided with cleaners/disinfectants, proper personal protective equipment and training on how to use the cleaner/disinfectant properly.

After school hours, custodial staff will again clean/disinfect the school in its entirety.

If there is a suspected or positive COVID-19 case within a building, all areas the suspected or positive person occupied will be deep cleaned and sanitized by night custodians.

Resources:

- [MDH: COVID-19 Cleaning and Disinfecting Guidance for Schools and Child Care Programs](#)

Ventilation Measures

Ventilation is one component of maintaining healthy environments and is an important COVID-19 prevention strategy for schools. The ventilation system at RBEC has been adjusted to increase total airflow to occupied spaces and the air filtration is set to the highest point possible. Portable air filtration units have been added to Tower View classrooms.

Resources:

- [CDC: Ventilation in Schools and Childcare Programs](#)

Health Screening and Monitoring

Important Definitions from the Minnesota Department of Health:

- Self-monitoring means monitoring yourself carefully for any symptoms. Everyone should be doing this throughout the day.
- Close Contact means being within 6 feet of someone who has COVID-19 or COVID-19 like symptoms for more than 15 minutes at a time. However, the definition excludes students and staff who were within 6 feet of an infected person if masks were correctly worn by the infected person and the close contact and other mitigation strategies were followed.
- Self-quarantine means that you are not experiencing symptoms, but you were in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 or is showing symptoms of COVID-19.
- Self-isolation means you are actively exhibiting symptoms consistent with COVID-19 and should be at home, preventing the spread of COVID-19 to others. If an individual tests positive for COVID-19, he or she must have an isolation period of 10 days from the onset of symptoms or the positive test.
- A fever is defined as 100.4° and higher.
- Lab diagnosed/confirmed case means that the individual had a lab confirmed positive test for COVID-19.

Regular screening for symptoms of COVID-19 and ongoing self-monitoring throughout the day is an effective prevention strategy to quickly identify signs of illness and help reduce exposure.

Students, staff and visitors must conduct their own symptom screening prior to coming to school/work, again when arriving at any GCED facility, and throughout the day. Similar to testing for COVID-19, screening is a snapshot in time of particular risks at that moment. **It is imperative that everyone monitor their health throughout the day for changes and respond accordingly.**

Symptoms of COVID-19 include:

MORE common symptoms: fever greater than or equal to 100.4° F, new cough or cough that gets worse, difficulty/hard time breathing, new loss of taste or smell

LESS common symptoms: sore throat, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, chills, muscle pain, extreme fatigue/feeling very tired, new severe/very bad headache, new nasal congestion/stuffy or runny nose

Answer the following questions each morning before sending your child to school:

1. Did my child recently test positive for **COVID-19**?
2. Does my child have any of the **COVID-19** symptoms listed above?
3. Did my child have close contact (within 6 feet for more than 15 minutes) with someone who recently tested positive for **COVID-19**?

If you answered YES to any of the above:

- **Do not send your child to school**, report your child's absence, and contact your child's healthcare provider.
- **Report your child's symptoms or exposure to Sheri Johnson, the GCED School Nurse at sjohnson@gced.k12.mn.us or by calling 651-388-4441 x1102.**

Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after being exposed to the COVID-19 virus. Not everyone with COVID-19 has all of these symptoms, and some people may not have any symptoms. Talk to your health care provider and seek medical care immediately with any of the following **emergency warning signs for COVID-19**:

- Trouble breathing
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- New confusion
- Inability to wake or stay awake
- Bluish lips or face

Resources:

- [MDH Video: What You Should Do if You Feel Sick – for Students](#)

Exclusion Guidance for COVID-19

GCED is responsible for addressing student, employee and visitor exclusions in collaboration with MDH and local public health. We are required to follow the Minnesota Department of Health [Recommended COVID-19 Decision Tree for People in Youth, Student, and Child Care Programs](#). This informs students or staff on their expected date of return to work/school following illness, a positive COVID-19 test, or a close contact exposure.

Students who become sick with COVID-19 symptoms during the school day will be isolated (under supervision) in the designated isolation room/space whenever possible until they can be sent home. However, if it is not feasible to maintain separate spaces, physical distancing should be implemented to the extent possible in the shared space. **It is important during this pandemic that you pick your child up as soon as possible when they are sick so we can limit the risks to other students and staff and reduce the spread of COVID-19. Please be sure we have up-to-date contact information so we can promptly reach you. Please follow exclusion recommendations provided to you and your family.**

Every situation is different and will present varying guidelines. As a general rule:

- People who have been in close contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19 or COVID-19 symptoms should contact their healthcare provider and are recommended to self-quarantine for 10 to 14 days (depending on type of contact) from the last known date of exposure and monitor for symptoms. Testing for COVID-19 is also encouraged, at a minimum, if symptoms appear.
- People who test positive for COVID-19 or have COVID-19 symptoms should contact their healthcare provider (if they haven't already) and should stay home for at least 10 days from the start of symptoms. Symptoms must be improving prior to returning AND

fever must be resolved for at least 24 hours without the aid of medication. Testing for COVID-19 is encouraged. Close contacts, including household members, should consult their health care provider and generally stay home for 10-14 days (depending on type of exposure) and monitor for symptoms.

- Documentation of a negative COVID-19 test or a letter certifying release from isolation is not required, but the person must follow the recommended exclusion guidance
- People who are fully vaccinated (14 or more days after their vaccination series) OR have tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 90 days and have close contact with someone who has COVID-19 do not need to quarantine if they do not have any symptoms and meet other conditions.

Resources:

- [CDC: What to Do If You Are Sick](#)
- [CDC: COVID-19: Quarantine vs. Isolation](#)
- [MDH: What to do if You Had Close Contact with a Person with COVID-19](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions about COVID-19 Testing](#)

Reporting COVID-19 Concerns and Contact Tracing

Minnesota Rule 4605.7070 requires any person in charge of any institution, school, childcare facility or camp to report cases of COVID-19 to MDH according to the [Reportable Disease Rule](#).

GCED needs your help in controlling the spread of COVID-19 by identifying and reporting concerns early and following recommended exclusion guidance.

COVID-19 Reporting

- **Report your child's symptoms or exposure to Sheri Johnson, the GCED School Nurse at sjohnson@gced.k12.mn.us or by calling 651-388-4441 x1102.**
- Information reported will be evaluated by the nurse to determine exclusion guidance in a manner consistent with applicable law and privacy policies, including the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

COVID-19 Contact Tracing

Contact tracing helps to slow the spread of COVID-19. Contact tracing means identifying and talking to people who are infected with COVID-19 and then identifying and talking to all the people they may have infected. If all of these people then stay home and away from others, they cannot spread the disease. It is important for them all to stay home, because even though some people with COVID-19 never feel sick, they still can give the disease to others.

Positive student, staff or visitor cases should be reported as soon as possible to **Sheri Johnson, the GCED School Nurse at sjohnson@gced.k12.mn.us or by calling 651-388-4441 x1102.** The

school nurse will notify MDH of confirmed COVID-19 cases (as required by Minnesota Rules, Chapter 4605.7050) and follow MDH guidance.

GCED Staff will follow up directly with people when a positive test is reported for COVID-19 AND the individual has been in a GCED facility AND was determined to be in close contact (being within 6 feet of someone who has COVID-19 or COVID-19 like symptoms for more than 15 minutes at a time).

- **Our priority is to exclude people that test positive for COVID-19 or have COVID-19 symptoms as soon as possible and inform close contacts second.** Being identified as a close contact does not mean you have COVID-19. It means you may be at risk and should go home to quarantine for 10-14 days (depending on type of exposure) and monitor for symptoms. It takes time to gather this information. If masks were correctly worn by the infected person and the close contact and other mitigation strategies were followed, a person would not fall under the definition of close contact.
- **Staff and students identified as close contacts will be notified by the GCED nurse or administrator.**
- **Other important communication with recommendations and next steps based on responses will be provided as needed.**
- *New for the 2021-22 school year, students will not be considered a close contact if both the positive student and the student contact were wearing a well-fitting mask, per MDH guidelines.*

Health information is protected under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). We are unable to share who the person with COVID-19 or COVID-19 like symptoms is.

GCED follows guidance from MDH to inform staff, families and the public regarding positive COVID-19 cases. As a general rule, building-wide notifications will not occur unless there is a need to shut down a facility according to our COVID-19 Cleaning and Disinfection Procedure or upon the recommendation of MDH. Staff, families and the public will be notified of school closures and any restrictions in place to limit COVID-19 exposure. **GCED provides need to know information and recommendations from MDH to the following groups:**

- **Facilities Department** so that additional cleaning measures can be implemented as recommended (individual names are not shared)
- **Administrators** who oversee that site or program

Resources:

- [CDC: Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools: Contact Tracing in Combination with Isolation and Quarantine](#)
- [MDH Video: COVID-19 Contact Tracing: How it Works](#)

Metrics and Procedures Used for Shifting Guidelines

- 10% threshold of positive COVID-19 cases and symptoms in a facility requiring quarantine or isolation will be used as a guideline to move to consider changes to this plan.
- If a student has tested positive, they must isolate for 10 days. The GCED will follow the recommendations of the MDH [Recommended COVID-19 Decision Tree for People in Schools, Youth, and Childcare Programs](#). As stated above, masking exceptions due to disability and medical need will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- The GCED COVID-19 Team will continue to meet to review data, latest guidance and respond to questions.