Close contact definitions and testing and isolation protocols

Transition to a very high caseload for public schools

Background

Keeping schools open and safe is important for students, staff, parents/carers and the broader Western Australian economy.

The school based very high caseload protocols are critical as part of the overall strategy to:

- maximise face-to-face learning and student attendance at school; and
- facilitate a quick return to school for asymptomatic close contacts, school staff and students following exposure to COVID-19, under the critical worker protocols.

In a very high caseload environment, a **close contact** includes:

- **A household close contact:** a household member or intimate partner of a person with COVID-19 who has had contact with them during their infectious period.
- Someone who has had close contact with a person in their infectious period, including:
  - At least 15 minutes face-to-face contact where *a mask was not worn by both the* person with COVID-19 and the exposed person
  - Greater than two hours within a small room or classroom environment, *where masks have been removed* for this period by both the person with COVID-19 and the exposed person (note: others wearing masks in this scenario would not be a contact)
    **NOTE: the contact can occur either inside or outside school.*
  - Someone who is directed by WA Health that they are a close contact.

Testing and isolation protocols

Under very high caseload, specific settings apply to schools. This includes the ability for some **asymptomatic close contacts** to return to school to work or study.

	Protocol
Staff and students- Confirmed positive case	Isolate for a minimum of 7 full days; if symptoms still present, continue isolating until symptoms clear; or if no symptoms after Day 7, leave isolation. *No exit testing or clearance is required.
Staff and Students-	Quarantine for a full seven days either from the date of symptom onset or date of exposure to case, whichever is later; and

Symptomatic close contact	Take a PCR test or RAT on Day 1 or as soon as possible
	• if positive – follow confirmed COVID-19 case guideline
	• if negative PCR, continue to quarantine
	• if negative RAT, continue to quarantine and take a repeat RAT in 24 hours
	  ○ if RAT positive – follow confirmed COVID-19 case guideline
	  ○ if RAT negative – continue to quarantine
	
	If at Day 7, no new household members have tested positive – take a RAT again on Day 7
	• If positive, follow confirmed COVID-19 case guideline
	• If negative, leave quarantine after Day 7

Students – asymptomatic close contacts (other than household close contacts)-	Continue attending school, if no symptoms.
	
	Students who are a a close contact, other than a household close **contact**, can continue to attend school under a modified quarantine arrangement.
	
	Take a PCR test or a RAT on Day 1 or as soon as possible:
	• if positive – follow confirmed COVID-19 case guideline
	• if negative return to school. The student is allowed to attend:
	  - school;
	  - out of school care; and
	  - sporting or cultural training, practice or events organised through the relevant school and held immediately before or after school on the school grounds, travelling between the student's usual place of residence and the place where the activity above takes place.
	• Otherwise is required to isolate.
	
	Take a PCR test on Day 6 or a RAT on Day 7:
	• if positive – follow confirmed positive case guideline. All positive RATs must be reported to WA Health via www.healthywa.wa.gov.au/ratregister.
	• if negative – no further action required.
	
	When students return to school, principals are not required to confirm any evidence of testing and/or a negative test result.
	
	Note: If symptoms develop, leave school to isolate and take a RAT or PCR test.
	• If PCR test is negative - isolate until symptoms resolve.
	• If RAT is negative – take a repeat RAT in 24 hours and continue to isolate until symptoms resolve.
	
	For either of the above, if the test/tests are negative, and are no longer symptomatic, return to school.

Students - asymptomatic household close contact – **Staff without a critical worker exemption - asymptomatic close contact**	Students and staff that are a close household contact of a confirmed case are unable to attend school. They must quarantine for a full 7 days from the time of the positive case's test; and take a PCR test or a RAT on Day 1 or as soon as possible: • if RAT positive – follow confirmed COVID-19 case guideline • if negative PCR or RAT, continue to quarantine All positive RATs must be reported to WA Health via www.healthywa.wa.gov.au/ratregister. Take a PCR test on Day 6 or a RAT on Day 7: • if positive – follow confirmed positive case guideline. All positive RATs must be reported to WA Health via www.healthywa.wa.gov.au/ratregister. • if negative – and no new household members have tested positive – quarantine ends after Day 7, and monitor for symptoms. When students return to school, principals are not required to confirm any evidence of testing and/or a negative test result. If symptoms develop, follow the guidance for a symptomatic close contact.
Staff- Critical worker - asymptomatic close contact	Continue to work*. Take daily RAT for 7 days. Isolate when not at work, work in a surgical mask, travel to and from work alone, if possible. **Note**: If symptoms develop, leave school to isolate and take a RAT or PCR test. Follow the protocol for symptomatic close contacts. *Critical workers who are close contacts should only continue to work if the school is unable to identify relief staff and in mutual agreement with the critical worker.

For current Test, Trace, Isolate and Quarantine (TTIQ) information, please refer to: https://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/Articles/A_E/Coronavirus/COVID19-information-for-business-and-industry/TTIQ-Plan.