

BRITTON-HECLA SCHOOL DISTRICT 45-4

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The mission of the Britton-Hecla School District is to promote a positive, challenging and safe environment for every student.

K-12 Student Screenings and Limitations, and Return to School Policy

(CDC information current as of 7/23/20)

Limitation of symptoms screenings as part of school reopening strategy

- The CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) does not currently recommend universal symptom screening be conducted by schools.
- Parents and caregivers are strongly encouraged to monitor their children for signs of infectious illness every day.
- Students who are sick should not attend school in person.
- Limited data about COVID-19 in children suggest that children are less likely to get the virus than adults, and if they do contract COVID-19, they generally have less serious illness than adults.
- Large studies have suggested around 16% of children with the virus infection do not develop symptoms. This means that even when schools have symptom screenings in place, some students with the virus, who have the potential to transmit the illness, will not be identified.

Many symptoms of COVID-19 are also present in common illnesses such as

- Strep Throat
- Common Cold
- Flu
- Asthma
- Seasonal Allergies

Takeaways and challenges

- ✓ The overlap between COVID-19 symptoms with other illnesses means that many people with symptoms of the virus may actually be ill with something else.
- ✓ This is even more likely in young children who typically have multiple viral illnesses each year. It is common for young children to have as many as eight (8) respiratory illnesses or “colds” every year.
- ✓ Fever has been the most frequently reported symptom. However, fever is common in several illnesses and can be taken improperly and interpreted as fever.
- ✓ There are no symptoms, or set of symptoms, that only occurs in children diagnosed with COVID-19.

Students with chronic conditions like asthma or allergies may have symptoms like cough or nasal congestions without having any infection at all. As a result, symptom screenings have the potential to exclude some students from school repeatedly even though they do not have COVID-19 or any contagious illness. This in turn may worsen disparities in students who already miss school frequently because of chronic medical conditions.

Students who are sick with contagious illnesses should not attend school, but most illnesses do not require the same level or length of isolation that COVID-19 does. Excluding students from school for longer than what is called for in existing school policy based on COVID-19 symptoms alone risks repeated, long-term unnecessary student absence.

While screening may reduce some COVID-19 transmission in schools, transmission may still occur because of asymptomatic, pre-symptomatic, and mildly symptomatic students. Additionally, because symptom screenings will likely identify individuals who have symptoms that are unrelated to COVID-19 and, at times, unrelated to any infectious illness, students may be inappropriately excluded from school, which may cause unintended harm. **It is because of these limitations that the CDC does not currently recommend that universal symptom screenings be conducted at schools.**

In addition, if there is minimal COVID-19 transmission in the community, symptom screenings will be more likely to identify people with symptoms who have something other than COVID-19. Symptom screenings in this scenario will be more likely to identify other things, NOT COVID-19, including certain chronic symptoms, some of which may not require staying home.

Symptom screenings also **do not** assess whether it is safe for an individual student to attend school or whether a student has an increased risk for severe illness if they develop COVID-19, nor do they diagnose someone with COVID-19.

Uses of symptom screening at home

The Britton-Hecla School District will continue to reinforce to students, parents and caregivers, and staff **the importance of students staying home when sick** until at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever (temperature of 100.4 or higher) or signs of a fever (chills, feeling very warm, flushed appearance, or sweating) without the use of fever-reducing medicine.

The CDC has updated their process as to what should be included in the daily home screenings for students and also narrows the scope a bit. It has been divided into two sections as follows:

Section 1: Symptoms

If your child has any of the following symptoms that would indicate a possible illness that may decrease their ability to learn or put them at risk for spreading the illness to others:

- **Temperature 100.4 degrees or higher when taken by mouth;**
- **Sore Throat;**
- **New uncontrolled cough that causes difficulty breathing (for students with chronic allergic/asthmatic cough, a change in their cough from baseline);**
- **Diarrhea, vomiting, or abdominal pain; or**
- **New onset of severe headache, especially with a fever.**

Red Symptom Alone= Exclude until 24 hours after fever resolves

Blue Symptoms Alone= Exclusion for COVID-19 not necessary. Follow existing school policy.

Section 2: Close Contact/Potential Exposure

If your child has experienced any of the following:

- **Had close contact (within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes) with confirmed COVID-19; or**
- **Had close contact (within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes) with a person under quarantine for possible exposure to COVID-19; or**
- **Traveled to or lived in an area where the local, Tribal, territorial, or state health department is reporting large numbers of cases; (*New cases exceed rate of 100 cases per 100,000 population in the last week*)**
- **Live in areas of high community transmission, while the school stays open** (not currently a concern for us based on the framework)

Green exposure + Red or Blue Symptoms= Exclude until test result is negative OR if untested, at Least 10 days since symptom onset (and 24 hours without fever AND symptoms improved).

Return to School Policy

If the student/parent/caregiver answers **Yes to any question in Section 1, but No to any question in Section 2**, the student should be excused from school in accordance to existing school illness policies.

If the student/parent/caregiver answers **YES to any question in Section 1 and Yes to any question in Section 2**, the student should be referred for evaluation by their healthcare provider and possible testing. **It is important to note that the CDC states that schools should not require testing results as part of return to school policies. Students that are tested and have a “negative” result should be allowed to return once symptoms have improved. Those not tested should adhere to CDC guidelines below before being permitted to return to school.**

Students that **have been diagnosed with having COVID-19 OR who answer Yes to any question in Section 1 or YES to any question in Section 2**, who have not received a “negative” test result, should stay home, isolate themselves from others, monitor their health, and follow direction from the State Department of Health or local health department. **Students and their families are advised that the local health department may contact the family for contact tracing.** Again, CDC direction is clear in that a “negative” test result is not required to return to school; however, the following CDC guidelines must be adhered to prior to returning to the classroom:

- **An individual should wait/isolate ten (10) days since the symptoms first appeared and at least 24 hours without a fever and without fever reducing medicine.**
- **An individual should wait/isolate fourteen (14) days if they had any contact or potential contact with a person who has been diagnosed with COVID-19**

Our student isolation procedures was outlined in a previous document and those procedures will be followed using the information contained in this document.

Steve Benson
Superintendent
Britton-Hecla.

