

August 20, 2021

Dear Staff, Families, and Community Members,

### **Updated Close Contact Information**

On August 12, 2021, the Maine Center for Disease Control and the Maine Department of Education came out with new recommendations which further support students being and staying in school. Close contacts continue to be required to quarantine for 10 days from school and school activities after COVID-19 exposure. The only exceptions are if at least one of the following conditions applies to the close contact:

1. The close contact (staff or student) is vaccinated and if the exposure occurred more than 14 days after the individual's completion of the vaccine series. If the exposure occurred after vaccination but prior to the 14 days, the close contact must quarantine for the full-time period: or
2. The close contact (staff or student) has a previous positive COVID-19 test result (molecular or antigen) collected within 90 days of the exposure: or
3. The close contact (staff or student) participates in weekly school pooled testing and the exposure was a school exposure; or
4. The school has a mandatory masking policy. If so, then an exposed classroom **student** does not need to quarantine from regular school-day activities when the student's close contact was at least 3 feet from an infected student provided that the school enforces consistent and correct use of well-fitting masks and no direct physical contact occurred. *(Exception is limited to classroom exposures only. Exposures that occur in buses, cafeterias, and school-sponsored activities are not eligible for exception 4. The exception does not apply to teachers, staff or other adults in the classroom.)*

### **Pooled Testing**

Join our Pooled Testing in RSU 16 Informational Webinar on Tuesday, August 24, 6:00-7:00 PM via Zoom webinar

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89515939398?pwd=Q01iZTcySnk2U2Q4ZjYrdWljS2NxZz09>

Passcode: 873181

**The Goal:** Keeping children in school full-time, safely and successfully in the fall of 2021 requires that we know about and respond to the potential spread of COVID 19 in schools. While vaccines are the best protection, more Maine people must get vaccinated to reach herd immunity, vaccines are not yet available to all children, and variants make COVID 19 unpredictable. Pooled testing offers the most efficient way to know about and limit COVID 19 in schools.

### **The Tool: What is pooled testing?**

Pooled testing combines a whole group's tests (5-25 individuals) into one 'pool' instead of testing everyone individually. Because pool participants get tested for COVID 19 weekly, they do not need to quarantine *from school* even if they are considered the close contact of another, school-related COVID-positive case. The whole process takes about 15 minutes per week.

If all individuals in the pool are negative, the pooled PCR test will come back negative and nothing further is required. If an individual in the pool is positive, the pool test result will be positive and pool members will be tested with Binax NOW Antigen tests to follow up. Meanwhile, pool members do not need to isolate unless their individual tests return positive or they are symptomatic. On average, about 1% of the pools require follow up because of a positive result.

Pooled testing will also cut down on the number of individuals involved in contact tracing. **Students who do not participate in pooled testing who are identified as close contacts must be quarantined.**

**How it works:** Pooled COVID-19 testing offers school staff, students, and families more certainty about their school and work schedules because participants do not have to quarantine. Pooled testing also increases confidence in children's safety at school because it provides a better understanding of COVID-related risks.

- Unlike other COVID-19 tests, pooled testing offers less disruption from in-person learning and on-site work. (Non-participating students still have to quarantine when exposed to COVID-19.)
- It reduces the likelihood of school transmission by supporting prompt isolation of any positive individuals
- It maintains the confidentiality of participating students (pooled samples are not labeled with student names)
- Having testing in place ahead of potential COVID-19 surges will help a school cope more effectively with community transmission

**Why are we requiring all families to complete the Meal Application Form if meals are no charge?**

The family income data provided by the application informs key funding for school resources. This includes school meal reimbursements, funding for Title I programs, funding and resources for afterschool programs, State subsidy, funding for special education, teacher loan forgiveness.

**How can I complete the Meal Benefit Application?** The **COMPLETELY CONFIDENTIAL** application is available to print, complete and return to your school or you can complete the online form at [www.SchoolLunchApp.com](http://www.SchoolLunchApp.com). If you have difficulty accessing either of these methods, the form can also be sent home with a student...just contact your school's office to make the request. If you have any questions please contact Ellen Dore, RSU 16 Food Service Director, [edore@rsu16.org](mailto:edore@rsu16.org), 207-998-5400 ext 107.

Sincerely,

Ken Healey and Amy Hediger