



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

P.O. BOX 2360
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

August 26, 2021

Dear Parents and Guardians,

With the new school year well underway, I would like to acknowledge the tremendous work our schools are doing to keep schools open and safe for learning. This letter is to inform you of the processes our schools have implemented to address questions about the safety measures we have in place.

As cases increase in the broader community, we are seeing a similar increase in cases in our schools. It is important to note that unlike the spread seen in the community, our data is showing spread has been very limited on campuses.

Since July 1st, there have been 833 confirmed staff and student cases across the Department, which comprises more than 200,000 students and employees. In 3 out of 4 cases, the infected individual was not on campus during the infectious period, an indication that our mitigation strategies are working to help prevent spread at schools.

We are closely monitoring all cases in partnership with the state Department of Health to identify any potential threats such as clusters in our schools. To date, there is no evidence of that.

Minimizing the Spread of COVID-19

Every public school is expected to follow our COVID-19 Health and Safety Guidance for School Year 2021-22 (bit.ly/HIDOE-safetyguidance), which is based on the state Department of Health COVID-19 Guidance for Schools and aligned with the CDC's Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools. This guidance emphasizes four core essential strategies:

- Increasing our **vaccination** rate is one of the best ways to protect against COVID, which is why we continue to encourage vaccination among all staff and eligible students. Visit hawaiiicovid19.com/vaccine for information on vaccination sites.
- Anyone who comes on campus is expected to conduct a **wellness check** each morning before arriving (bit.ly/HIDOE-WellnessCheck). If your child feels sick, please keep your child home.
- **Masks** are required at all times indoors, except when eating or drinking. Schools have made exceptions for outdoor activities if physical distancing is enforced.
- **Hand hygiene** is an essential part of minimizing the spread of the virus.

Through frequent check-ins with school leaders, it is clear that schools are implementing the core strategies consistently and students are doing their part. If you have any concerns about the protocols at your child's school, please contact your school administrator or complex area office.

COVID-19 Cases in Schools

Please reference the attached flyers to learn more about how close contacts are identified in school settings, what the quarantine procedures are, and the criteria for safely returning to school.

Each Friday we share confirmed staff and student cases reported during the week on our website at bit.ly/hidoe-covid-updates. This week we plan to unveil an interactive dashboard, designed with parents in mind, to display current COVID case data in schools.

For all confirmed and probable cases, schools maintain confidentiality in accordance with state and federal law and provide:

- Immediate notification to individuals who may have been in close contact with the infected person about possible exposure; and
- Broad notification to staff and parents/guardians about the possible exposure and steps taken to contain spread.

If you have student-related health questions, you can speak with a Hawaii Keiki registered nurse or nurse practitioner through our Hawaii Keiki Health Hotline at (844) 436-3888 Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Prioritizing in-person learning by ensuring our schools are safe will take all of us working together. Thank you for your continued support of public education.

Sincerely,



Keith T. Hayashi
Interim Superintendent

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Attachment: 1) HIDOE COVID-19 Close Contacts and Quarantine Flyer