

January 21, 2022

Dear Parents and Guardians:

As we shared in our update last week, state and local guidance regarding COVID procedures and protocols for students and staff will continue to be updated as we move through the global pandemic. We wish to update you on the most recent change.

Beginning Monday, January 24, Horseheads, along with all Chemung County school districts, will follow the new state Department of Health contact tracing procedures, which are deemed to be safe by the state and local health authorities. As a result, districts and the county will end daily contact tracing and identifying direct contacts in schools. The district, with the continued help from parents and staff, will continue to follow protocols for symptomatic, direct contact, and positive students and staff members. All other COVID protocols including distancing and masking remain in place.

Of all the contact tracing we do as a district, the number of resulting direct contacts in our schools who become positive remains extremely low. This means our schools are not where the virus is spreading. As a district, we have implemented protocols that prevent the spread of COVID in schools. This includes required distancing, masking, and cleaning protocols. Additional safeguards put in place include updating ventilation, testing unvaccinated staff and student-athletes weekly, distributing home COVID tests, and implementing a Test to Stay procedure to identify positive direct contacts prior to the school day.

The basic best practices remain: If your child feels sick, **keep your child at home and get your child tested**. The same is true for our staff members and the community.

What to do if your child has symptoms of COVID or any illness, or is a direct contact:

- **If your child tests positive,**
 - Keep your child at home.
 - Report the result and any direct contacts to the county through their new reporting portal at this link: <https://forms.chemungcountyny.gov/covidpaperwork/>.
 - Please also contact your school nurse to give the district this information for attendance purposes.

- **If your child has symptoms but tests negative on a home test,**
 - Keep your child at home.
 - Contact your medical provider to make arrangements for an alternative diagnosis or additional testing.
 - If your child gets an alternative diagnosis or a negative test from your medical provider, the child may only return to school once they are 24 hours with no symptoms.
 - If you do not get an alternative diagnosis or an additional negative test from a medical provider, the district must treat your student as a presumed positive for COVID with a five-day isolation period.

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- **If you learn that your child is a direct contact from a positive COVID exposure,**
 - Keep your child at home.
 - Notify the school nurse and sign up for the Test to Stay procedure (TTS) if eligible and if you wish for your child to continue attending school during their quarantine.
 - For updated information on the Test to Stay procedure, click here: <https://horseheadsdistrict.com/HCSDDTestToStayStrategy.cfm>. Please note the location of the TTS program will move from our High School Fieldhouse to individual buildings beginning in late January.
 - Report the direct contact information through the county's new reporting portal at this link: <https://forms.chemungcountyny.gov/covidpaperwork/>. Please also contact your school nurse to give the district this information for attendance purposes.

Opportunities for test kits

We completed our second round of test distribution to parents/guardians this week. We will continue to distribute tests as long as we receive enough test kits. Each distribution is a new event: you can receive tests each time we hold a distribution, but we are unable to give multiple tests to those who could not make prior distributions.

Here are two other opportunities to obtain test kits:

- Chemung County will hold a test distribution Tuesday, January 25, from 5-7pm at the Chemung County Fairgrounds in Horseheads, and Thursday, January 27, from 10am to noon at Chapel Park in Pine City. Two kits per vehicle will be distributed. This is for Chemung County residents only.
- The federal government is mailing free COVID test kits to residential homes beginning at the end of this month. To register for the kits to be mailed to your home, go to <https://www.covidtests.gov/>.

Child care survey

Districts have been asked to share a child care survey from the Southern Tier Central Regional Planning and Development Board and Pro Action. These organizations will use the survey results to develop strategic responses to local needs. They ask that parents complete the survey by January 31 at this link: [Parent Survey](#).

As a reminder, updates are posted to our website at <https://horseheadsdistrict.com/HCSDDhealthsafetyguide2021-22.cfm>. We continue to move through this pandemic, adapting to updates from state and local public health experts and safeguarding our students and staff. We can and will get through this together. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Dr. Thomas J. Douglas
Superintendent of Schools