CONTACT TRACING

As noted in the New York State Department of Education's guidance to schools for reopening, Recovering, Rebuilding, and Renewing: The Spirit of New York’s Schools, “Contact tracing is a public health function performed by local public health departments to trace all persons who had contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19. This allows public health officials to put in place isolation or other measures to limit the spread of the virus. Schools must cooperate with state and local health department contact tracing. Schools can assist public health departments in knowing who may have had contact at school with a confirmed case by:

- keeping accurate attendance records of students and staff members;
- ensuring student schedules are up to date;
- keeping a log of any visitors which includes date, time and where in the school they visited; and
- Assist local health departments in tracing all contacts of the individual at school in accordance with the protocol, training, and tools provided through the New York State Contact Tracing Program.

Confidentiality must be maintained as required by federal and state laws and regulations. School staff should not try to determine who is to be excluded from school based on contact without guidance and direction from the local department of health.”

Questar III BOCES will continue to work closely with Rensselaer, Columbia, and Greene Counties Departments of Health and any other department of health as applicable to staff and/or students.

In the event an individual is identified as a confirmed case within a school, the local health department will determine a starting date for which the school will need to provide contact tracing information. This date will be 48 hours prior to the individual becoming symptomatic. To this end, Questar III BOCES will need to keep records that will be made available to the local health department for those who may have been in close contact with the confirmed case. Any close contacts will be identified by the local health department. The COVID-19 School Resource Person identified by Questar III BOCES may be asked to assist the county with quarantine surveillance monitoring of contacts in connection with a confirmed case in a school.

If a student or staff member is identified by the local health department as a contact, they will be contacted by a county Case Manager and be instructed to quarantine for 14 days. Any contact identified by the local health department may not return to school (or work) until such a time as they are released from mandatory quarantine by the Case Manager.
SCHOOL CLOSURE

School closure decisions will occur in consultation with the local health department. This may involve the closure of a classroom or entire facility depending on the quantity of suspected and/or confirmed cases. There may be no need to close a school building if the local health department determines that the identified close contacts are excluded from school and the facility may continue normal operations. Full closure of a school facility may be necessary in some situations and will be implemented on a case-by-case basis.

TRAVEL ADVISORY

Any staff or students who travel out of state to any location listed on the Governor’s Travel Advisory list, will be required to quarantine for 14 days after returning to New York State. Persons who travel to any states listed on the Travel Advisory list should self-report their travel to the COVID-19 School Resource Person for instructions. Persons who travel via airplane and are required to complete a survey upon arrival in NYS, should still self-report their travel to the COVID-19 School Resource Person. If a location has been removed from the travel advisory list while a person is serving their related 14 day mandatory quarantine, that person must still complete the full 14 days of mandatory quarantine before returning to school.

In the event that someone within a household travels to a state on the travel advisory list and returns to New York State, but the student or staff member does not travel, that student or staff member may be allowed to return to school without a 14 day mandatory quarantine. In the event that person in a household who has traveled becomes a positive case, the local health department will identify all household members as close contacts and quarantine all members of the household for 14 days.

ESSENTIAL STAFF

Essential employees will be determined by the school district. Under Executive Order 2026, the services these staff perform are considered essential functions of the school facility, which include, but is not limited to, healthcare services and services necessary to maintain the safety, sanitation, and essential operation of the school facility.

In the event that any of these essential employees are identified as contacts by the local health department, they may return to school and continue to perform their job duties as long as they remain asymptomatic and wear appropriate PPE at all times within the school facility. Any essential staff who are identified as contacts will undergo surveillance monitoring by the COVID-19 School Resource Person. If they become symptomatic, they will immediately self-report to the COVID-19 School Resource Person, who will contact the local health department to determine testing protocols and quarantine procedures. Essential staff are mandated to follow quarantine protocols for 14 days outside of their normal work duties.