

August 11, 2020

Dear Healthcare Providers:

Some Humboldt County schools are beginning on-site instruction this year. In order to reduce transmission in the school setting, parents are required to screen their child for illness prior to allowing them to come to school each day. Additionally, schools are being asked to screen students for illness and send ill students home immediately.

To avoid quarantining entire classrooms, it will be critically important to quickly distinguish COVID-19 from other common childhood illnesses. To that end, we are asking parents to contact their child's healthcare provider for evaluation and possible testing for COVID-19, if they are experiencing symptoms consistent with this infection. If the child does not have a healthcare provider, parents are instructed to contact Public Health through our Joint Information Center (441-5000) to assist with obtaining evaluation and testing as indicated.

A child who is seen and has an alternate diagnosis made, may return to school per normal school guidance for various infections such as strep or conjunctivitis. If there is no clear alternate diagnosis, children should be tested for COVID-19. *Please bear in mind that during flu season, co-infection is a possibility contingent upon increased disease prevalence, and testing for COVID-19 should be considered despite a plausible alternate diagnosis.*

Testing:

- In symptomatic children, a rapid point of care test done in the office setting, is acceptable for ruling out COVID-19. Use of rapid tests is not recommended for asymptomatic individuals.
- Alternatively, a specimen may be collected and sent to the Humboldt County Public Health Lab for testing as is currently done. Please note on the requisition that this is a student sample.
- Unless there is compromised testing availability locally or the commercial lab you use is providing dependable, rapid turnaround time, please do not send these specimens outside the county for testing.

Management Post-testing:

- Children awaiting test results must be isolated at home until results are available.
- Children with negative test result may generally return to school when they have been afebrile for at least 24 hours and symptoms have improved however, illness-specific guidance should be followed for return to school.
- Children with COVID-19 will be required to isolate at home for at least 10 days after onset of symptoms and 24 hours post fever and have demonstrated a clear improvement in symptoms. They may then return to school. Siblings and other household contacts will be required to quarantine for the duration of the child's infectious period plus an additional 14 days after the child has been cleared to return to school.

Should you have adult patients or non-school-aged children test positive for COVID-19 in your office, please advise parents regarding isolation and quarantine for *all* household members. It is important that children in these households are not sent to school if a household member is ill with COVID-19 until cleared to do so.

Please contact Public Health at 268-2182 with questions. We truly appreciate your assistance with managing care for children in on-site education and for our entire community during this pandemic.

