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| SEAL_Revised, Brighter Letters_crop_compressed | **Commonwealth of Massachusetts** |
| ***Executive Office of Health and Human Services*** |
| **Department of Youth Services** |
| **Updated 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Exposure and** **Return to Work Guidance for Fully Vaccinated Staff in** **DYS Residential Programs** |

*This summary is based on the EOHHS Residential and Congregate Care Programs 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Guidance (updated on August 4, 2021) and the EOHHS Residential and Congregate Care Programs: 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Surveillance Testing Guidance (updated on August 5, 2021).[[1]](#footnote-1)*

*The purpose of this summary is to help staff understand the updated COVID-19 mitigation requirements for fully vaccinated staff working in DYS residential programs. DYS reserves the right to rescind or modify this guidance at any time if it determines that the public health or health and safety of youth and staff are at risk, or to comply with state and federal guidance.*

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health [COVID-19 Guidance for Health Care Providers](https://www.mass.gov/doc/dph-covid-19-guidance-for-all-health-care-organizations-and-providers) provides the overarching guidance for all health care providers and organizations that operate residential congregate care programs. Congregate care providers must continue to comply with federal and state COVID-19 guidance. This includes, but is not limited to, guidance on: [a) personal protective equipment (PPE](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/personal-protective-equipment-ppe-during-covid-19)), b) [considerations for health care personnel after vaccination](https://www.mass.gov/doc/considerations-for-health-care-personnel-after-covid-19-vaccination/download), and c) [return to work guidance for all workers](https://www.mass.gov/lists/covid-19-return-to-work-guidance). In addition to these requirements, it is recommended that programs check the CDC website frequently to ensure they are implementing the most current CDC guidance and [Massachusetts guidance](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-public-health-guidance-and-directives).

**Universal Use of Facemasks
All** staff must wear masks at all times indoors in all state and provider operated residential programs regardless of vaccination status.

**Testing Protocol for Residential Programs**

## If a Program has No New Positive COVID-19 Cases in Youths or Staff

All programs are to test **100% of its staff each week**, regardless of vaccination status or county positivity rates. This will go into effect **August 12, 2021.**

If the ongoing surveillance testing indicates that there are positive COVID-19 staff member(s), the program will follow the surveillance testing program outlined below for “New Positive COVID-19 Cases in Residents or Staff” beginning Thursday of the next full week following the positive test.

## If a Program has New Positive COVID-19 Cases in Youth or Staff

If the testing results indicate a positive COVID-19 individual(s), then the program must conduct weekly testing of **all staff and youth, including close contacts, including any staff and youths who are fully vaccinated and those who are not,** until the testing results in no new positive COVID-19 individuals for 14 consecutive days.

Testing should take place as soon as possible (e.g., within 48 hours). Once testing results show no new positive COVID-19 individuals for 14 consecutive days, the program must follow the surveillance testing program outlined above for “No New Positive COVID-19 Cases from Staff Testing” beginning the next full week.

**Close Contact with a Confirmed Case of COVID-19**

A staff or youth may have had close contact with an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19 and not test positive themselves.

*“Close contact” is defined as being less than 6 feet from a person who has tested positive for COVID-19 for about 15 minutes* ***while that person was symptomatic or in the 48 hours prior to illness onset or specimen collection if the person has been asymptomatic.*** *Close contact also includes having direct contact with infectious secretions of a confirmed or clinically diagnosed COVID-19 case (e.g., being coughed on) while not wearing recommended personal protective equipment or PPE (e.g., gown, gloves, facemask, eye protection).*

If a fully vaccinated staff is identified as a “close contact,” they are to be tested for COVID-19 following the EOHHS surveillance testing program for “New Positive COVID-19 Cases in Residents or Staff.” Testing should take place as soon as possible (e.g., within 48 hours).

Fully vaccinated staff are not required to quarantine following exposure to a person with suspected or confirmed COVID-19, as long as they remain asymptomatic and have not tested positive. If an asymptomatic vaccinated staff exposed to a person with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 is allowed to work, they must wear a surgical mask at all times and practice social distancing while at work. Additionally, fully vaccinated close contacts must actively self-monitor for symptoms and take their temperature once daily for 14 days after their last exposure. Staff who develop mild symptoms, or who have a temperature of 100.0 F must immediately self-isolate, contact their supervisor and get tested.

**Suspected or Confirmed Cases of COVID-19 in Staff**

Fully vaccinated staff who have either tested positive for COVID-19 or who are exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 (including fever, chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, or new loss of taste or smell) and have been told by a medical professional that they have, or probably have, COVID-19, even in the absence of a test, must inform their supervisor and isolate at home.

Staff exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms or told by a medical professional that they have or probably have COVID-19, may end isolation and return to work under the following conditions:

*For Symptomatic Staff*

• At least 24 hours have passed since recovery, defined as resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications;

And,

• Improvement in symptoms;

And,

• At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared.

For symptomatic staff who are immunocompromised, or those with serious COVID-19 illness or requiring hospitalization, they should wait until 20 days have passed since the date of the first COVID-19 positive test result and should consult with a healthcare provider.

*For Asymptomatic Staff*

* At least 10 days have passed since the first positive COVID-19 diagnostic test was taken, assuming symptoms did not subsequently develop.
1. For further details, please refer to the EOHHS guidance at <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-public-health-guidance-and-directives#eohhs-congregate-care-> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)