

Interim Guidance on Management of COVID-19 Cases in Early Childhood Education Programs (See updated [tables](#) for quick reference.)

Key Points (updated January 31, 2022)

- Report all COVID-19 cases to <http://redcap.link/chicovidreport> (select option 2 “Community congregate setting: single case or cluster of 2 or more cases”). Programs must report to CDPH clusters of 2 or more cases of COVID-19 occurring within 14 calendar days of each other within 24 hours of identifying the cluster, in order to prevent COVID-19 transmission in schools and ensure efficient case investigation and contact tracing.
 - See [COVID-19 Reporting to DCFS and CDPH](#)
- As soon as possible after being notified that someone in the childcare setting has tested positive for or been diagnosed with COVID-19, childcare setting staff should notify [close contacts](#) of exposure, in accordance with applicable privacy and other laws.
 - See [Childcare Program Contact Tracing](#)
- Students and staff who have been in [close contact](#) with someone who has COVID-19 should receive [diagnostic testing](#) and follow quarantine guidance from the school. Any close contacts who [test positive for SARS-CoV-2](#) or who have COVID-19 like symptoms should begin [isolation](#) regardless of [vaccination status or prior infection](#).
 - See [“For student or staff identified as close contact”](#)
- Vaccine status has been changed to reflect CDC’s definition of being [“up-to-date”](#).
- Childcare program quarantine for close contacts that are not [up-to-date](#):
 - **Quarantine** at home for **5 calendar days** after last exposure to the COVID-19 case (return day 6) if the individual can wear a well-fitting mask days 6-10. Date of last exposure is considered day 0.
 - Individual should be tested day 5 after exposure, per [CDC guidance](#).
 - The individual may end quarantine after day 5 (return day 6) if no symptoms of COVID-19 developed during daily monitoring
 - If individuals cannot mask consistently, they should follow 10 day quarantine guidelines.
- Childcare providers should refer to [CDC’s Guidance for Operation Child Care Programs during COVID-19](#) to protect students, staff and communities. Messaging to families and staff around safe COVID-19 practices and community mitigation practices outside of school to protect school cohorts and education as an essential service are critical for your school community. This includes reinforcing safe travel recommendations for individuals and students who are not up-to-date on vaccination.

COVID-19 Reporting to DCFS and CDPH

Clear guidance should be provided to parents and staff about acceptable methods of reporting COVID-19 lab results or diagnosis to the program as soon as possible. Program should reinforce that children and staff be kept out of facility pending the results of COVID-19 testing for any reason.

Each case of COVID-19 in any type of childcare program should be reported through the confidential CDPH COVID-19 Online Case Report Form: <http://redcap.link/chicovidreport> (select option 2 "Community congregate setting: single case or cluster of 2 or more cases").

In order to complete the form, you will need the following information:

- Total number of classrooms/cohorts impacted
- Total number of students thought to be exposed (close contacts)
- Total number of staff thought to be exposed (close contacts)
- The positive individual's reported or observed symptom onset date
- The positive individual's last date at facility
- The positive individual's test date, testing provider (if known)
- Additional optional information includes grade level/classroom, information about positive case potential exposure (recent travel, social gatherings, contact with positive case).

If your program has 2 or more cases (apart from household members) that involve 2 or more different classrooms, make a note in your [Online Case Report Form](#) to receive additional CDPH support and guidance. This may prompt more intensive case investigation. When in doubt, quarantine the room in question, and reach out to CDPH on the next business day. Under [Public Health Order No. 2020-2](#), programs must report to CDPH clusters of 2 or more cases of COVID-19 occurring within 14 calendar days of each other within 24 hours of identifying the cluster, in order to prevent COVID-19 transmission in schools and ensure efficient case investigation and contact tracing.

Childcare Program Contact Tracing

Given your access to staff and student records, the need for prompt notification to close contacts, and the relationship you have with your staff and families, your program is best positioned to conduct initial contact tracing and notification of close contacts within your facility/program. CDPH will conduct contact tracing to identify close contacts outside of the facility/program.

Contact Tracing First Steps

- Above all, ensure the identity of the positive individual is protected.
- Interview the staff member or child's parent/guardian by telephone as soon as you receive a verbal or written report that they tested positive. Questions to ask include:
 - Were they were diagnosed through a test?
 - If so, what type (nose swab, mouth/oral swab, or blood test).
 - If they had only an antibody (blood test) and they have not had any symptoms, they are not a positive COVID-19 case.
 - What was the test date?

- What was the last day they were in the facility/at your location? (Please confirm by looking at attendance files.)
 - If symptoms, please ask the first day of their symptoms.
 - If NO symptoms, confirm the test date again.
- Complete the CDPH Online COVID-19 Case Report Form: <https://redcap.link/chicovidreport> (select the second option: Cluster of 2 or more cases OR single case in a congregate setting).

Determining Who is a Close Contact

- [Close contacts](#) are individuals who were within 6 feet of an infected person (laboratory-confirmed or a clinically compatible illness) for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period (for example, three, individual, 5-minute exposures for a total of 15 minutes). An infected person can spread SARS-CoV-2 starting 2 days prior to their first day of symptoms (or for asymptomatic individuals, 2 days prior to their test date) through their last day at school (or ten days after their onset of symptoms/test date).
- Assess whether there were any other staff members not assigned to the classroom or children in other classrooms with whom the positive individual had close contact (e.g., children or siblings of positive individuals). If the positive individual is a staff member, this assessment should include an interview of that staff member.
- **In order to protect childcare operations, rotation of staff between classrooms should be limited to reduce number of exposed children and staff should a staff member become infected.**

Isolation/Quarantine Recommendations

Definitions:

- **Isolation** is used to separate people infected with SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, from people who are not infected. These individuals can have symptoms or no symptoms (asymptomatic). People who are in isolation should stay home until it's safe for them to be around others. In the home, anyone sick or infected should separate themselves from others by staying in a specific "sick room" or area and using a separate bathroom (if available).
- **Quarantine** is used to keep someone who might have been exposed to COVID-19 away from others. Quarantine helps prevent spread of disease that can occur before a person knows they are sick or if they are infected with the virus without feeling symptoms. People in quarantine should stay home, separate themselves from others and monitor their health.
- **[Symptoms of COVID-19](#):** People with COVID-19 have had a wide range of reported symptoms – ranging from mild symptoms to severe illness. Symptoms may appear 2-10 days after exposure to SARS-CoV-2. Symptoms can include:
 - Fever (100.4°F or higher) or chills
 - Cough
 - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
 - Fatigue from unknown cause
 - Muscle or body aches from unknown cause
 - Headache
 - New loss of taste or smell
 - Sore throat
 - Nausea or vomiting
 - Diarrhea

- This list does not include all possible symptoms and children with SARS-CoV-2 infection may experience any, all, or none of these symptoms.
- [Fully Vaccinated](#) are ≥ 2 weeks following receipt of the second dose in a two-dose COVID-19 vaccine series or ≥ 2 weeks following receipt of 1 dose of a single-dose COVID-19 vaccine.
- [Up-to-date on vaccination](#) for children is defined as having:
 - completed a primary COVID-19 vaccine series at least two weeks ago.
- [Up-to-date on vaccination](#) for **adults (18 year old and older)** is defined as having:
 - completed a primary COVID-19 vaccine series (Pfizer, Moderna, or J&J) AND have received a booster if eligible, OR
 - completed a primary vaccine series (Pfizer or Moderna <5 months; J&J vaccine < 2 months) **and are not yet eligible for a booster.**

For student or staff with a positive test:

- Ensure the **positive individual** is aware that they should **isolate**, meaning stay home and away from others until it has been **at least 5 days** since their symptoms first appeared (or for asymptomatic individuals, from their test date) AND at least 24 hours with no fever (without using fever-reducing medications) AND symptoms have improved. It is important to understand that the risk of spreading COVID-19 on days 6-10 is not 0.
 - After isolation period, individuals may return to childcare but must continue to wear a well-fitting mask through day 10, when around others.
 - If masks need to be removed (e.g., for lunch), individuals **should be adequately physically distanced through day 10 after symptom onset of positive test.**
 - If individual is **unable to mask** due to age or other physical limitations, they it is safest for them to **stay at home for 10 days.**
 - A positive result on any viral test [antigen, rapid antigen, molecular (Nucleic Acid Amplification Test (NAAT) such as an RT-PCR)] should be considered positive for public health purposes.

For student or staff with symptoms suggestive of COVID-19:

- CDPH strongly recommends testing for all staff and students with new onset of symptoms of COVID-19 *Symptoms of COVID-19* above.
- Childcare programs should quarantine household members of a symptomatic student or staff member who also attend the facility pending the results of testing.
- If anyone on school campus or in a daily symptom screening check is identified with COVID-19 like symptoms, administrators should take immediate action, regardless of the person's vaccination status.
 - Separate the symptomatic person from other students/staff and ensure the symptomatic person and anyone they have contact with wears a mask, until transportation home or to a healthcare provider can be arranged. This will require a dedicated area in the facility and disinfection afterward. See guidance on [what to do if you are sick](#) for details on how to effectively separate someone with COVID-like symptoms. Consider ways to maintain privacy as may be required.
 - Refer the person with COVID-like symptoms to a healthcare provider to receive clinical evaluation and [diagnostic testing](#) for SARS-CoV-2. People being evaluated for COVID-19 should inform their healthcare provider of their vaccination status at the time they arrive for care.
 - If a child or staff member tests positive, they should be instructed to isolate (see "[For student or staff with a positive test](#)" section above)

- If a child or staff member tests negative, ensure it has been 24-hours with no fever (without fever-reducing medication) AND with improved symptoms before allowing them to return to school.
- If a student or staff member has symptoms of COVID-19, and it is determined by a medical provider that the individual likely does NOT have a COVID-19 infection, the student or staff member still needs to be tested and may only return to school if the following are met:
 - **Documentation of a negative test for COVID-19; AND**
 - **It has been 24-hours with no fever (without fever-reducing medication);**
 - Only if the two above criteria are met would a note from a medical provider documenting an alternate diagnosis be acceptable if the student or staff member continues to be symptomatic for another reason besides COVID-19 infection (e.g., seasonal allergies, other viral illness).
- If a symptomatic student or staff member does not get tested for COVID-19, CDPH does not recommend relying on a medical provider's note alone without a negative COVID-19 test result to allow a symptomatic student or staff to return to school. COVID-19 cannot be ruled out by symptom history or clinical exam alone. Only the right test done at the right time can rule out COVID-19.

For students or staff identified as close contacts:

- Children or staff with **close contact** to a person testing positive for COVID-19 should be **quarantined**, meaning staying at home and excluded from childcare for **5 days** (return day 6; date of exposure is day 0). If close contacts develop symptoms, they should be evaluated and tested for COVID-19. Siblings/household members of exposed asymptomatic children do not require quarantine or testing unless they themselves were also exposed.
 - After quarantine period, individuals may return to school but must continue to wear a well-fitting mask through day 10, when around others.
 - If masks need to be removed (e.g., for lunch), individuals **should be adequately physically distanced through day 10 after exposure.**
 - If the individual **cannot correctly and consistently mask**, it is safest for them to quarantine at home for **10 calendar days** after last exposure to the COVID-19 case (return day 11). Date of last exposure is considered day 0.
 - Individual should be tested day 5 after exposure, per [CDC guidance](#).

Exceptions: Students or staff with close contact to a person diagnosed with COVID-19 do NOT have to quarantine in these situations

- Someone who is [up-to-date](#) on vaccination and shows no symptoms of COVID-19. However, up-to-date individuals should get tested 5 days after their last date of exposure to a person testing positive, even if they don't have symptoms. They must also wear a mask indoors in public for 10 days following exposure.
- Someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 90 days AND completed 10-day isolation period AND remains without COVID-19 symptoms,

For students or staff who have recently traveled:

- Refer to [Chicago's Emergency Travel Order](#).

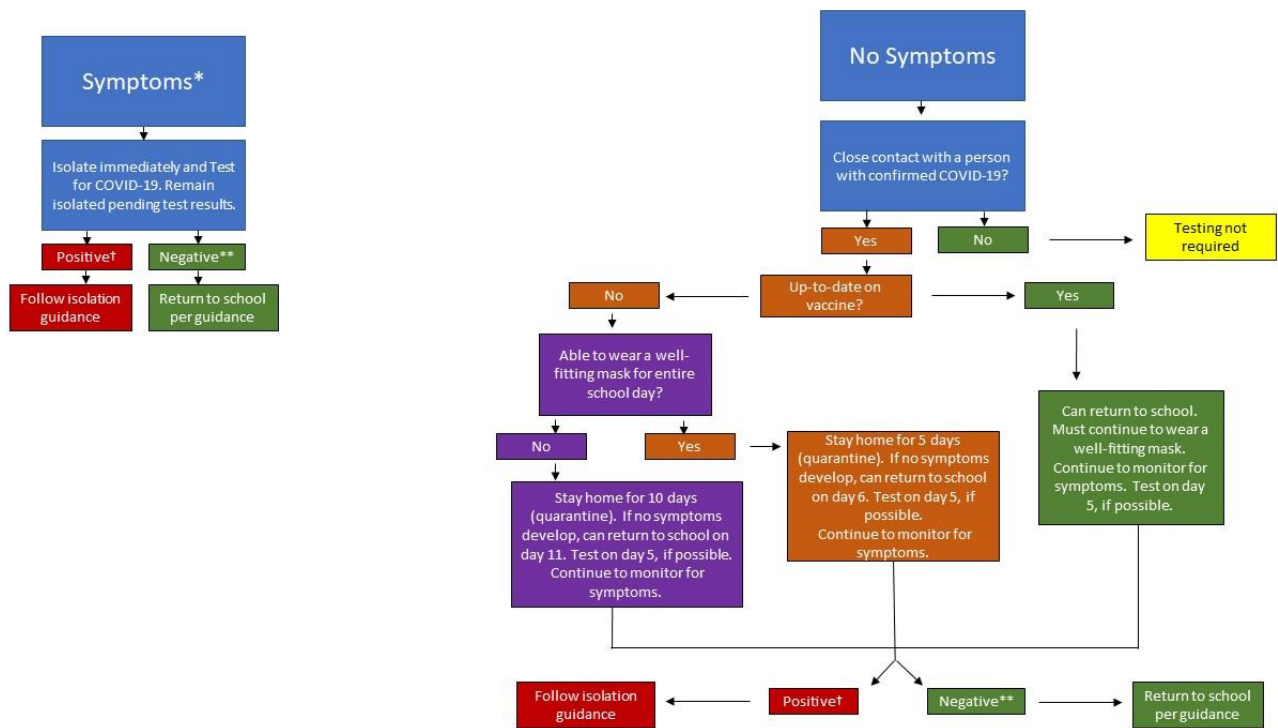
Table 1. COVID-19 Quarantine Guide (For those Identified as Close Contacts) Based on Vaccine Status: Adults

If you:	Do this:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have completed a primary vaccine series (Pfizer, Moderna, or J&J) AND have received a booster if eligible, OR • Have completed a primary mRNA vaccine series (Pfizer or Moderna < 5 mo, J & J < 2 months) and are not yet eligible for a booster 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to work. • Must wear a mask around others indoors for 10 days. • Test on day 5, if possible. <p><i>If a person develops symptoms, they should immediately quarantine until a negative test confirms symptoms are not caused by COVID-19.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have completed the primary vaccine series but have not received a booster if eligible, OR • Have not completed a primary vaccine series (two weeks after second dose) OR • Have never been vaccinated against COVID-19 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay home for 5 days. • Test on day 5, if possible. • Must wear a mask around others indoors from days 6-10. <p><i>If a person develops symptoms, they should immediately quarantine until a negative test confirms symptoms are not caused by COVID-19.</i></p>

Table 2. COVID-19 Quarantine Guide (For those Identified as Close Contacts) Based on Vaccine Status: Children

If you:	Do this:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have completed a second dose of a primary vaccine series at least two weeks ago 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to attend school. • Wear a mask around others for 10 days. • Test on day 5, if possible. <p><i>If a person develops symptoms, they should immediately quarantine until a negative test confirms symptoms are not caused by COVID-19.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have only completed a single dose of a Pfizer vaccine series, OR • Have completed both doses of a Pfizer vaccine series less than two weeks ago, OR • Are unvaccinated <p>AND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can mask correctly and consistently throughout the duration of a full day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay home for 5 days. • After that continue to wear a mask around others consistently and correctly from days 6-10. • Test on day 5, if possible. <p><i>If a person develops symptoms, they should immediately quarantine until a negative test confirms symptoms are not caused by COVID-19</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are ineligible for vaccination due to age <p>AND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are unable to wear a mask for extended periods of time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay home for 10 days. • Test at day 5 if possible. <p><i>If a person develops symptoms, they should immediately quarantine until a negative test confirms symptoms are not caused by COVID-19</i></p>

COVID-19 Testing Guide for Students and Employees of Childcare Programs Located in Chicago



*New onset of symptoms including fever (100.4°F or higher), new onset of moderate to severe headache, shortness of breath, new cough, sore throat, vomiting, diarrhea, new loss of sense of taste or smell, fatigue from unknown cause, muscle or body aches from unknown cause.

† A positive result on any single viral test (antigen, rapid molecular or PCR) with appropriate pre-test probability as determined by the clinician should be considered positive for public health purposes. Subsequent negative tests do not change requirements for quarantine and isolation.

** The diagnostic viral testing landscape for COVID-19 is evolving rapidly. Clinicians should choose an appropriate test based on their clinical suspicion of COVID-19. Factors to consider include the sensitivity and turnaround time of the test, the clinical presentation, time since symptom onset, risk of exposure to COVID-19, underlying risk factors for severe COVID-19 and the risk of onward transmission. Clinicians may reference CDC's testing guidance contains an Antigen Test Algorithm posted at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/lab/resources/antigen-tests-guidelines.html>.

Up-to-date on vaccination:

Adults(18 +): completed a primary COVID-19 vaccine series (Pfizer, Moderna, or J&J) AND have received a booster if eligible, OR completed a primary vaccine series (Pfizer or Moderna <5 months; J&J vaccine < 2 months) **and are not yet eligible for a booster.**

Children: completed a primary COVID-19 vaccine series at least 2 weeks ago

Notifications

- Notify the identified close contacts that they were exposed to someone with COVID-19 at the facility/program. It is recommended that you notify exposed staff and the families of exposed students via a preferred, successful method of communication at your program. A sample close contact notification template is included at the end of this document.
 - Instruct them to quarantine and get tested for COVID-19 as appropriate based on vaccination status and return to program guidance detailed above.
 - Close contacts should monitor their symptoms for 10 days and get tested if they develop symptoms of COVID-19.
- All staff and families of the program, regardless of whether they are close contacts or not, should be notified of the positive case, while maintaining confidentiality. You may use the general notification letter template at the end of this document as a guide.

Cleaning

Perform enhanced cleaning and disinfection after persons suspected/confirmed to have COVID-19 have been in the facility. Follow [CDC cleaning and disinfection recommendations](#). **Unless otherwise recommended by CDPH, automatic full-facility/program closure is not required with a single case of COVID-19 as long as close contacts have been notified of quarantine recommendations.**

What Childcare Programs Can Expect After Reporting a Case

1. After receiving a report, CDPH will review the report and will contact you only if it determines further follow-up is needed.
 - a. Refer to the instructions in the confirmation email on contacting CDPH if you have any questions regarding your report.
2. CDPH will call the positive staff member or family of the child once the positive lab result is received from a healthcare provider and conduct household and community contact tracing outside of your facility/program.
3. You should notify CDPH if additional positive cases are identified in your facility/program by filling out the CDPH COVID-19 confidential [online case report form \(select the second option: Community congregate setting\)](#).
4. Refer to the following resources for further information:
 - a. www.chicago.gov/coronavirus
 - b. www.chicago.gov/reopening
 - c. [Restore Illinois Licensed Day Care guidance](#)
 - d. [IDPH Decision Tree for Symptomatic Individuals](#)
 - e. [IDPH Guidance for Child's Face Covering Medical Tolerance](#)
 - f. [CDC SARS-CoV-2 Guidance for ECE](#)

Notification Templates

CLOSE CONTACT COMMUNICATION

Subject: Exposure to COVID-19 Case at (PROGRAM)

Dear (INDIVIDUAL'S NAME),

We are writing to update you on a recent development regarding the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). We have learned that a (PROGRAM) community member has been diagnosed with COVID-19. You were identified as a close contact of this individual.

You should monitor your health starting now through (DATE OF 10 DAYS AFTER LAST EXPOSURE TO POSITIVE CASE). Symptoms of COVID-19 include fever (temperature greater than 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit), chills, cough, shortness of breath, fatigue, muscle/body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, nausea or vomiting, and diarrhea.

If your child is not up-to-date on vaccination, they should not go to school and should avoid public places through (DATE of 5 days after last exposure to positive case). If they are up-to-date on vaccination, they may return to school/work as long as they are able to wear a mask consistently and correctly while in school.

If they develop symptoms of COVID-19, please contact their medical provider to discuss evaluation and testing. Any individuals who are sick with or exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 must stay home and away from others for at least 5 days since their symptoms first appeared and at least 1 day (24 hours) with no fever (without using fever-reducing medications) and improved symptoms, whichever is longer. If they are unable to mask consistently while at school, they must stay home for 10 days. See the Chicago Department of Public Health's [guidance on what to do if you are sick](#). If their symptoms are severe, such as difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, new confusion or difficulty waking up, or bluish lips or face, please seek the closest emergency department or call 9-1-1 immediately.

If they do not have symptoms, it is recommended that they are tested day 5 after their exposure to a positive case, which was (DATE OF EXPOSURE), **even if they are up-to-date on vaccination**. Close contacts of positive cases are encouraged to call their healthcare provider to arrange for testing. If other testing options are needed, refer to the [City of Chicago's coronavirus testing website](#). Remember even if they test negative, they must still complete the full quarantine if they are unvaccinated. If they test positive, they must stay home for at least 10 days after their test date.

For any additional COVID-19 questions or support, please visit www.chicago.gov/coronavirus for the most reliable information. If you do not find the information you need on the website, reach out to your program administrator for further guidance.

The health and wellness of our staff and students are the highest priority of (PROGRAM). We continue to follow Chicago Department of Public Health and CDC guidelines as we ensure proper protocols and preventative measures are in place for the health and safety of our staff and students. Please contact us at (PROGRAM CONTACT INFORMATION) if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

(SIGNATURE)

This version was released on 2/17/22. It may be updated with new guidance. Please visit www.chicago.gov/coronavirus to find the latest version.

GENERAL COMMUNICATION

Subject: Confirmed COVID-19 Case at (PROGRAM)

Dear Staff and Families,

We are writing to update you on a recent development regarding the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). We have learned that a (PROGRAM) community member has been diagnosed with COVID-19.

The individual was last at the school on (DATE). [only to be included if it can be done without obviously identifying the individual. If needed, give a broad date like "the week of "] To ensure the health and safety of our families and staff, following CDC guidance, (PROGRAM) will ensure appropriate cleaning and disinfection of our school.

Students and staff who have been identified as having been in close contact with this individual (WILL BE/HAVE BEEN) notified via a separate communication. As a reminder, close contact is defined as being within 6 feet of an infected person for a total of 15 minutes or more, or within 3 feet of contact when properly masked in a school setting. Those who had brief, casual contact with an infected individual are not considered at great risk of transmission; for most people, the illness is generally mild and can be safely managed at home. As always, everyone should monitor their health and stay at home if they develop symptoms. Anyone who develops severe symptoms should seek medical care immediately.

We continue to follow Chicago Department of Public Health and CDC guidelines as we ensure proper protocols and preventative measures are in place for the health and safety of our staff and students.

Public Health Guidance

Symptoms of COVID-19 include fever (temperature greater than 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit), chills, cough, shortness of breath, fatigue, muscle/body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, nausea or vomiting, and diarrhea. If you or your child develop symptoms of COVID-19, please contact your medical provider to discuss evaluation and testing.

For severe symptoms, such as difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, new confusion or difficulty waking up, or bluish lips or face, please seek the closest emergency department or call 9-1-1 immediately.

Any individuals who are sick with or exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 must stay home and away from others for at least 10 days since their symptoms first appeared AND at least 24 hours with no fever (without using fever-reducing medications) AND improved symptoms.

For any additional COVID-19 questions or support, please visit www.chicago.gov/coronavirus for the most reliable information. If you do not find the information you need on the website, contact your program administrators. The health and wellness of our staff and students are the highest priority of (PROGRAM).

Please contact us at (PROGRAM CONTACT INFORMATION) if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

(SIGNATURE)

(PROGRAM LEADERSHIP NAME)