



Upper Bucks County Technical School

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September 19, 2020

Dear families and staff of Upper Bucks County Technical School,

We learned on Friday afternoon that a high school student has tested positive for COVID. The student did not have any symptoms while in school Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. The student had mild symptoms Wednesday evening September 16, 2020 and was tested on September 18th. The student did not attend school Thursday or Friday. The student is now feeling fine and is under a doctor's care.

We are following the protocols established by the Bucks County Department of Health. Their guidance is referenced below. Any student or staff that was in direct contact with the student will be receiving direct communication from the Bucks County Department of Health. If you have not received that communication, you or your child(ren) did not have direct contact with the student while at Upper Bucks County Technical School. The Department of Health will be conducting additional contact tracing and will notify families if anyone had direct contact with this student outside of school. Again, anyone having direct contact with this student at Upper Bucks County Technical School will be contacted by the Bucks County Department of Health.

All students and families are reminded that they should be regularly checking for symptoms of COVID-19. The most common signs and symptoms include: fever greater than 100 degrees, cough, shortness of breath, headaches, body aches, fatigue, loss/alterd sense of taste or smell, diarrhea, and runny nose/congestion. Anyone experiencing any of these should stay home from school and consider contacting your medical provider. It is vital that we all do what we can to protect the safety of the entire Upper Bucks County Technical School Community.

Please let me know if you have additional questions.

Sincerely,

Jeff Sweda
Executive Director

BUCKS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT SCHOOL REOPENING GUIDANCE

1. If there is a confirmed positive case in a student or staff member, do we have to shut down the classroom and/or the school?

No, that is absolutely not our recommendation. The preponderance of current evidence continues to suggest that children are less likely to be infected, less likely to have severe symptoms, and are at lower risk of spreading the disease to others. This has also been the situation so far in Bucks County case investigations. As COVID-19 will likely be with us for an extended period of time, and given that all school districts will almost certainly have cases, we want school districts to begin treating it similarly to the way we have successfully handled other communicable diseases in our schools, including pertussis (whooping cough), measles, strep throat, mumps, influenza, and meningitis. It is our strong intention to keep all classrooms, schools, and districts open, in the event of confirmed cases of COVID-19. One closure decision can lead to a potentially crippling, and precedent setting, domino effect of closures throughout the school district, and in other districts. We will work in conjunction with the principal and/or the superintendent on next steps for efforts to continue school/classroom activities without sending all contacts home. Depending on the situation, this may involve simply conducting enhanced surveillance for signs and symptoms and increasing sanitation and hygiene in the affected areas. Multiple cases may involve modifications to social distancing or mask usage.

2. If a student or staff member is confirmed positive, what are the steps to follow?

The Bucks County Health Department should be notified immediately, if we were not already aware. As part of all COVID-19 case investigations, information will be quickly obtained from the student or staff member as to their close contacts since the onset of their symptoms. The actual nature of the contacts will be explored in detail, and multiple variables (i.e. was the case actually symptomatic during school or did the case only develop illness at home) will be considered. We expect the school districts will provide information to assist our contact tracing efforts as much as possible. Once the information has been gathered, students and staff considered close contacts to the case (if any) will be notified of their exposure, using as little identifying information about the case as possible. Any mitigation steps will then be evaluated by the school and the health department as explained in question #1.

3. What happens if a student or teacher becomes symptomatic during school hours?

First, the student or teacher should leave the classroom immediately, put on a mask, and report to the nurse's office. The nurse should fully assess the student/teacher, including a temperature check and questions about any pre-existing conditions that may explain the symptoms. As the situation warrants, the nurse should contact a parent/guardian to arrange for transportation off-site. Staff and students with elevated temperatures should likely leave the building regardless of cause. The student or teacher's desk area should be sanitized prior to further usage. The student or teacher would then need to either get a COVID-19 test or medical clearance to return to school. The school should continue to operate as normally as possible until additional information becomes available on the student or teacher's status. There are many common reasons other than COVID-19 that could explain someone not feeling well at any particular time. Notifications would not be warranted in the absence of further details.