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Superintendent

Superintendent Update – February 1, 2022

Dear Students, Staff, Parents, and Community:

Following recent updates from the Virginia Department of Health (VDH), Botetourt County Public Schools will no longer conduct contact tracing for every individual case of COVID-19. This guidance aligns with current risks associated with the virus that causes COVID-19, and takes effect tomorrow, Wednesday, February 2. These changes are not retroactive, meaning those who have been identified as a close contact as of Tuesday, February 1 will follow the quarantine and contact tracing protocols currently in place.

We will continue to consult with local health officials at the VDH if we identify multiple cases within an identified group (e.g. in a grade level, within a particular class, among staff, etc.) or a possible outbreak in our schools. In these circumstances, contact tracing may be necessary. As individuals and families diligently report positive cases to school officials, we can monitor case levels and trends within our schools. I invite families and staff to review these new guidelines, which are covered in greater detail in the most recent COVID-19 Guidance Updates document available on our [COVID Information website](#).

Keeping students in school, while also providing a safe learning and working environment for our students and staff, continues to be our goal. This year has been uniquely difficult for everyone, and I express my ongoing gratitude to all our students, families, staff, and community for your perseverance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jonathan D. Russ". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial 'J'.

Jonathan D. Russ, Ed.D.
Superintendent

Botetourt County Public Schools
COVID-19 Guidance Updates
Effective February 2, 2022

Botetourt County Public Schools continues to review guidance issued by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), corresponding updates provided by the Virginia Department of Health (VDH), and current community transmission trends. The following is intended to provide information for our school community. We will continue to monitor and make adjustments to our plan as more information becomes available.

1. **MASK REQUIREMENTS:** Masks continue to be an important part of our layered mitigation strategies. Currently, masks are required by all students, visitors, and staff while indoors in all school buildings. It is important to note that many of the recent guidelines issued by the CDC and VDH rely on strict adherence to masking requirements.

The Botetourt County School Board voted on January 24, 2022, to immediately abide by the Governor's Executive Order #2, making masks optional for students, if the Supreme Court of Virginia upholds its constitutionality. In addition, the School Board set the date of March 7th to make masks optional for students.

Masks are required on all forms of BCPS school transportation per a federal order which includes school buses.

2. **VACCINE:** There is no vaccine mandate for students to return to school. BCPS will continue to collaborate with the VDH to make our facilities available for community vaccination events.
3. **ISOLATION:** Individuals who test positive for COVID-19 will be required to isolate at home. Individuals who have NO symptoms or whose symptoms have improved (must be fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications; see #7 for Signs of Illness) may return to school on day 6 with strict adherence to correct and consistent mask usage. Individuals who cannot consistently or correctly wear a mask for any reason will be required to stay at home for the full 10 days. Please see the VDH infographic [What to do if my child is ill or exposed to COVID-19?](#) dated 1/21/22 for more information about isolation periods for individuals who test positive for COVID-19.
4. **QUARANTINE:** Given the short incubation period of the current variant and recent guidance received by the VDH, beginning, February 2, 2022, BCPS will no longer be conducting individual contact tracing for every individual case of COVID-19. Parents and staff are asked to continue to report positive cases to school officials so that we can monitor case levels and trends within our schools.

BCPS will consult with local health officials at the VDH in the event that we identify multiple cases within an identified group (e.g. in a grade level, among staff, throughout the entire school, among a team, etc.) or a possible outbreak in our schools. BCPS recognizes that contact tracing* may become necessary in these events.

**Close contacts continue to be defined as being within 6 feet of a person who has COVID-19 for a total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period. Exceptions to close contacts for students in K-12 settings still apply.*

Please see the VDH infographic [What to do if my child is ill or exposed to COVID-19?](#) dated 1/21/22 for more information about recommendations for actions that should be taken if exposed to COVID-19. Individuals who are exposed to someone with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 will be required to follow the guidelines below:

- a. Fully vaccinated individuals 18 years or older who have received the recommended vaccine doses and boosters will not be required to quarantine if exposed to someone with a confirmed case of COVID-19. If symptoms occur, individuals should immediately quarantine for a minimum of five days or until a negative test confirms the symptoms are not attributable to COVID-19.
- b. Individuals ages 5-17 who have completed the primary series of COVID-19 vaccines will not be required to quarantine if exposed to someone with a confirmed case of COVID-19. If symptoms occur, individuals should immediately quarantine for a minimum of five days or until a negative test confirms the symptoms are not attributable to COVID-19.
- c. Individuals who have had a confirmed case of COVID-19 within the past 90 days will not be required to quarantine if identified as a close contact. If symptoms occur, individuals should immediately quarantine for a minimum of five days or until a negative test confirms the symptoms are not attributable to COVID-19.
- d. Individuals who are unvaccinated, have not completed a primary series of vaccines, who received the single dose of J & J vaccine over 2 months ago and have not received the recommended booster, or are ages 18 or older who have completed the primary series of vaccines but have not yet received the recommended booster shot when eligible, should follow the recommendations listed in the VDH infographic entitled [What to do if my child is ill or exposed to COVID-19?](#) dated 1/21/22. Quarantine periods are as described below.

- 5. SHORTENED PERIODS OF QUARANTINE FOR CLOSE CONTACTS:** BCPS will permit individuals self-identified as a close contact to a COVID-19 positive individual to return to school on day 6 if they remain symptom-free during days 1-5 of the quarantine period as long as the individual can consistently and correctly wear a mask when they return to school. Although testing is recommended, COVID-19 tests will not be required by BCPS for a return to school on day 6 for individuals who remain asymptomatic following an exposure. Individuals who cannot consistently or correctly wear a mask for any reason will be required to stay at home for the full 10 days following an exposure. Individuals who develop symptoms during days 1-10 will be required to quarantine a minimum of five days until symptoms improve or until testing shows the individual's symptoms are not attributable COVID-19.

For more information on when to end isolation or quarantine, please see the VDH document on [Home Isolation and Quarantine Release](#) dated 1/25/22.

- 6. TEST TO STAY:** Students who have been self-identified as a close contact to a positive individual, may qualify for the Test to Stay (TTS) program. TTS is a practice that consists of contact tracing and COVID-19 testing to allow close contacts that are not fully vaccinated to continue to attend school during their quarantine period.

The TTS program is only for individuals who:

- a. have NOT been vaccinated,
- b. remain ASYMPTOMATIC the entire time after a self-identified or school identified exposure,
- c. adhere to MASKING consistently at school each day on days 1-10 of an identified quarantine period, and

- d. have written parent/guardian agreement on file at the school.

Generally, students (who meet the above mentioned requirements and would normally be required to quarantine due to being a close contact) could return to school with proof of a negative result on a school-issued proctored online COVID-19 test administered at home each school day before reporting to school on days 1-5 of the quarantine period. Proof of the negative test must be provided to school officials and the individual must remain asymptomatic. More information on the TTS program will be provided when the tests become available to BCPS.

Not eligible for TST:

- **Individuals who are fully-vaccinated.**
- **Individuals who test positive for COVID-19.**
- **Individuals who become symptomatic.**
- **Individuals who are not willing or able to wear masks consistently.**
- **Individuals who do not meet the definition of a close contact.**

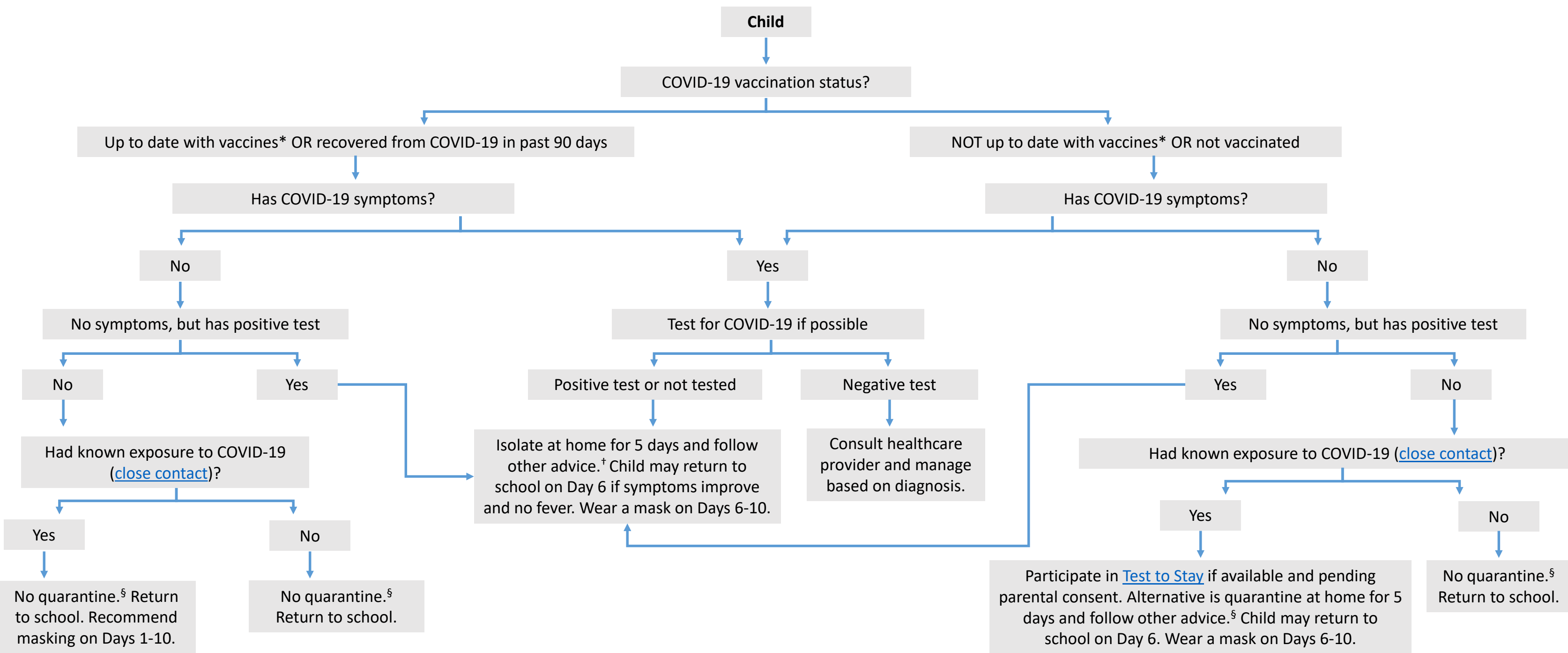
Note: In these situations, normal quarantine periods would apply. Other exclusions may also apply during periods of substantial transmission, during an outbreak, or during other situations in which regional and local epidemiologists recommend that TTS be temporarily paused and that regular quarantine periods be applied until the situation is stabilized. Currently, staff members are not eligible to participate in the TTS program.

Click on this link for more information about the [TTS Program](#). **Specific implementation procedures for the TTS program will be developed.**

7. **Signs of Illness:** Families are reminded to continue to perform self-checks each day for signs and symptoms of illness before reporting to school. Students should remain at home and contact school officials if signs of illness are present, if there is a suspected exposure to COVID-19 in the community, or if the child or a family member is being tested for COVID-19.

Signs of Illness include but are not limited to:

- Temperature of 100°F or higher
- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Difficulty breathing
- Chills
- Fatigue
- Muscle aches
- Congestion/runny nose
- Sore throat
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea



KEY POINTS: Regardless of vaccination status, any person with COVID-19 symptoms should be tested (if possible). If testing is not done or if the test is positive, the person should isolate at home and follow other recommendations. Children who are up to date on their COVID-19 vaccines or who have recovered from COVID-19 in the past 90 days do not need to quarantine (stay home) after close contact exposure.

***Up to date with vaccines** means a person has received all recommended COVID-19 vaccines, including boosters when eligible. VDH recommends that everyone remain up-to-date on COVID-19 vaccination. VDH generally recommends quarantine for anyone who is not up-to-date if they come into close contact with a person who is infectious with COVID-19. However, to minimize disruption to in-person learning, students ages 12-17 years who completed their COVID-19 primary vaccine series but have not yet received a booster can forgo quarantine at this time.

†**Isolate** means stay at home and away from others for at least 5 days after symptoms start (or positive test if no symptoms). Wear a mask when around others for a full 10 days. Day 0 is the date of symptom onset or positive test (if no symptoms).

§**Quarantine** means stay at home and away from others for at least 5 days after exposure to someone with COVID-19. Even if quarantine is not required, testing is recommended on Day 5, if possible, except for those who recovered from COVID-19 in the past 90 days; they should also wear masks around others for a full 10 days. Day 0 is the date of last exposure.

If you have confirmed or suspected COVID-19, you should isolate (stay home and away from others)

- This applies when you have a positive COVID-19 test – even if you have been vaccinated and even if you do not have [symptoms](#). It also applies to when you have [symptoms](#) and are waiting on a test result or are unable to get tested.
- Stay home for at least 5 days (Days 0–5)
 - If you have symptoms, count the day that your first symptom appeared as Day 0
 - If you do not have symptoms, count the day that you got tested as Day 0
- During isolation at home:
 - Monitor your health and contact your healthcare provider if your [symptoms](#) worsen
 - Separate yourself from other people and pets as much as possible
 - Wear a [well-fitting mask](#) if you cannot separate from others
 - Stay in a separate “sick room” and use a separate bathroom, if possible
 - Do not go to public settings or travel
 - If you are able and willing to get tested, get tested an antigen test on or soon after Day 5. If your test is positive, stay home through Day 10. If your test is negative, you may be able to end your isolation after Day 5.

If you have [COVID-19 symptoms](#), you can end isolation (leave your home) after Day 5 if these things have happened:

- At least 5 full days have passed since symptoms first appeared, and
- You are fever-free for 24 hours without fever-reducing medication, and
- Your other symptoms have improved
 - Note that loss of taste and smell might persist for weeks or months and this should not delay the end of isolation.

If you did not have [COVID-19 symptoms](#), you can end isolation (leave your home) after Day 5 if this has happened:

- At least 5 full days have passed since you were tested

If you end isolation after Day 5, you should still follow these steps on Days 6–10:

- Wear a [well-fitting mask](#) around others at home and in public. If you cannot wear a mask around others, continue to isolate at home until Day 10.
- Avoid travel, avoid people who have [weakened immune systems or who are at high risk for severe COVID-19](#), avoid places where you are unable to wear a mask, and avoid other people when you are eating.

*Based on CDC guidance for [Quarantine and Isolation](#). This VDH guidance applies to general community settings, including K-12 schools, colleges and universities, and workplaces. It does not apply to healthcare facilities or high-risk congregate settings (e.g., correctional and detention facilities, homeless shelters, or cruise ships). VDH currently recommends that child care facilities not apply the shortened quarantine and isolation periods as a best practice, but these may be considered for staff if there are critical staffing shortages. People with severe COVID-19 or weakened immune systems might need to isolate (stay home) longer than 10 days. They should talk with their healthcare provider about when it is safe to be around others.

If you had close contact with a person who has COVID-19 while they were contagious, you should take steps to protect yourself and others for 10 days after the close contact. You may need to quarantine (stay home and away from others).

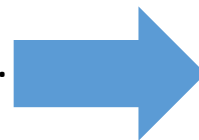
Close contact means

- Being within 6 feet of a person who has COVID-19 for a total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period or
- Having exposure to respiratory secretions (e.g., being coughed or sneezed on; sharing a drinking glass or utensils; kissing) from a person who has COVID-19

Exception for close contact: In K-12 settings, a student who is within 3 to 6 feet of an infected student is not considered a close contact as long as both students wore well-fitting masks the entire time. This exception may also be applied to school buses if seating charts are documented and adherence to seating assignments and mask use is verified.

You do not need to quarantine after close contact if you:

- Are up to date with your COVID-19 vaccines.
- Had COVID-19 within the last 90 days (you tested positive using a viral test).

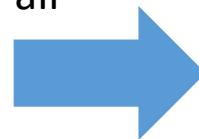


Count the last close contact date as Day 0 and take these steps on Days 0–10:

- Wear a well-fitting mask when around others in the home or public
- Monitor your health for COVID-19 symptoms. If you develop symptoms, get tested with a viral test (antigen or PCR test) and follow isolation guidance.
- If you do not develop symptoms, get tested on or soon after Day 5 if possible. People who had COVID-19 in the last 90 days do not need testing.

You need to quarantine after close contact if you:

- Are not up to date with your COVID-19 vaccines. This includes people who are not vaccinated.*
 - *Schools may consider forgoing quarantine for students ages 12-17 years who completed their primary vaccine series but have not yet received all eligible boosters. They should still take the steps listed above.



Follow the steps listed above and also these:

- Quarantine (stay home) and separate yourself from other people and pets as much as possible for at least 5 days (Days 0–5)
- Get tested on or soon after Day 5, if possible. If your test is positive, follow the isolation guidance.
- **You can end quarantine (leave your home) after Day 5** if you have no symptoms and can wear a mask when around others for Days 6–10. If you cannot wear a mask around others, quarantine at home until Day 10.
- **If you end quarantine after Day 5**, you should avoid areas where you cannot wear a mask, avoid people with weakened immune systems or who are at high risk for severe COVID-19, avoid other people when you are eating, and avoid travel for Days 6–10.

Notes about Isolation and Quarantine

When to get tested and what kind of test

- If you are able and willing to get tested, getting tested on Day 5 of isolation or quarantine is preferred. Getting tested soon after Day 5 is also acceptable.
- For people isolating at home, an antigen test is recommended. For people quarantining at home, an antigen test or PCR test is recommended.

Special Situations for Quarantine

Household close contacts or caregivers who cannot separate from the person with COVID-19 who is in isolation at home

- While someone is isolating at home, try to minimize close contact with others in the household as much as possible. This includes having the person with COVID-19 in a separate bedroom and using a separate bathroom if possible, staying at least 6 feet apart, minimizing time spent with each other, wearing well-fitted masks, and improving air flow by opening a window.
- If a household member has close contact with the person isolating at home during their 5-day isolation, then the household member needs to take steps to protect themselves and might need to quarantine. Count the date of last contact as Day 0 and follow the quarantine guidance on the previous page.

Healthcare Settings

- The VDH guidance for quarantine and isolation does not apply to healthcare settings. CDC guidance for [healthcare staff](#) and [residents](#) should be followed.

High-risk congregate settings (correctional and detention facilities, homeless shelters, cruise ships)

- The VDH guidance for quarantine and isolation does not apply to these settings. [CDC guidance](#) for these settings should be followed.

Summary of Recent Changes

- 1/25/22: On page 1 for people isolating at home who have a positive test, changed wording to stay home from “until Day 10” to “through Day 10.”
- 1/14/22: Updated who needs to quarantine and who does not need to quarantine to align with [CDC’s revised Quarantine and Isolation](#) guidance. For people who need to quarantine, added that schools may consider forgoing quarantine for students ages 12-17 years who completed their primary series, but not their boosters yet. In the close contact definition, removed living with or providing care for a person who has COVID-19.
- 1/7/22: Updated the isolation and quarantine guidance to align with [CDC’s Quarantine and Isolation](#) guidance released on Jan. 4, 2022. Shortened the isolation period from 10 days to at least 5 days and shortened the quarantine period from 14 days to at least 5 days. For quarantine, used CDC’s current criteria for who should quarantine and who does not need to quarantine after close contact, which is based on vaccination and booster status. Added steps to take during isolation at home, after close contact exposure, and during quarantine at home. Removed graphics.

*Based on CDC guidance for [Quarantine and Isolation](#). This VDH guidance applies to general community settings, including K-12 schools, colleges and universities, and workplaces. It does not apply to healthcare facilities or high-risk congregate settings (e.g., correctional and detention facilities, homeless shelters, or cruise ships). VDH currently recommends that child care facilities not apply the shortened quarantine and isolation periods as a best practice, but these may be considered for staff if there are critical staffing shortages.