



COUNTY OF DUTCHESS
DEPARTMENT OF BEHAVIORAL AND COMMUNITY HEALTH
Office of the Assistant Commissioner

MEMORANDUM

To: Dutchess County Schools
From: Dutchess County Department of Behavioral and Community Health
Date: January 7, 2021
RE: Guidance for Schools in Designating Contacts

As the data has shown, and as the Governor has highlighted many times, one of the safest places in the community is the classroom.

In an abundance of caution, the Dutchess County Department of Behavioral Health in coordination with Dutchess County schools has been following a broad quarantine policy whereby all individuals that shared a classroom with any known positive cases were considered exposed and were subject to a mandatory quarantine. This policy resulted in a large number of contacts for a relatively small number of positive cases. Throughout this school year, we have observed minimal spread within the classroom setting due to the strict adherence to safety standards including social distancing, mask wearing and other vital safety protocols. By continuing to adhere to strict safety protocols within these classroom settings, exposure risk can be reduced to a level that does not require the blanket roster based mandatory quarantine order as was the previous policy.

Based on further review of available guidance materials, and the lack of response from New York State to the requests for clarification, the Dutchess County Department of Behavioral and Community Health offers the following updated guidance related to quarantine standards within classroom settings.

Dutchess County DBCH will work with schools to determine the specific exposures within the classroom and school settings by identifying only those individuals who must be considered "close contacts" as subject to the mandatory precautionary quarantine. The definition for close contact includes spending 10 minutes or more with a confirmed COVID-19 case while standing within 6 feet of the individual. Wearing cloth masks does not impact exposure.

DBCH may consider other factors including virus strain, as part of the case investigation to determine the risk of exposure based on the particular circumstances of the exposure. DBCH and/or NYSDOH, reserve the right to issue and enforce mandatory quarantine orders for classroom-based exposure incidents when necessary.