

NTA Health and Safety Reference Manual – Understanding NPS Health and Safety Protocols

INTRODUCTION

This manual is a summary of the health and safety protocols that Newton Health and Human Services (HHS) and / or Newton Public Schools have put in place in order to keep schools safe during the COVID-19 crisis.

NTA's purpose in publishing this manual is to provide members with a guide as to what HHS and the district have said they will do to protect health and safety.

The district's safety protocols as provided by HHS center around four pillars, or strategies, for preventing virus transmission: face coverings, physical distancing, hygiene, and avoiding exposure. Summarized below are the components of each "pillar". Following these summaries are building checklists in each area.

Under the Unit A Collective Bargaining Agreement, Article 44 "Health and Safety", "The Committee will continue its best efforts to provide and maintain a healthful and safe workplace, with adequate heating, ventilation and lighting." It is the NTA's position that if the district fails to follow its own protocols for health and safety that is a violation of the CBA and subject to the grievance process.

We suggest that building reps and/or crisis team members form a health and safety team and use this manual and the associated checklists to identify building-based issues where the basic protocols for health and safety are not being adhered to. You can then bring the issue or issues to building administration to address what corrective actions will be taken. Please notify Chris Walsh at treasurer@newteach.org of any issues raised with administration so that we can track what is being done on the building level, and move the grievance to the next step where appropriate. If you are in need of support or guidance with this process, do not hesitate to reach out to Chris.

RESOURCE MATERIALS

- [COVID Health Manual](#)
- [NPS Mask Policy](#)
- [NPS Face Coverings Protocol](#)
- [Communication Protocol - COVID Response](#)
- [Protocol: Cleaning and Disinfecting of School Buildings](#)
- [NPS Custodial Procedures Manual](#)

FOUR PILLARS FOR PREVENTING VIRUS TRANSMISSION

Face Coverings:

- All staff and students are required to wear a face covering/mask throughout the day except while eating, drinking, or during mask breaks.
 - Exception: Only those who have a medical, behavioral or other issue making it unsafe to wear a face mask or face covering will be exempt from the mask and face covering requirement.
 - Protocol if student is non-compliant:
 - Step 1**: Teacher gives verbal and/or non-verbal redirections/reminders in class (three opportunities)
 - Step 2**: Teacher engages student in a restorative chat & re-teaches using visuals as appropriate (i.e., talks with student in hallway and reviews the expectation and how refusing to wear a mask causes harm to members of the community)
 - Step 3**: Behavior support, nursing, or therapeutic staff talks with student using a restorative approach - individualized decision based on student presentation
 - Step 4**: Principal or designee talks with student, teacher, and personnel involved in Step 3
 - Step 5**: Parent called and given the option to encourage child to wear mask or have their child learn remotely*
- * Students who struggle with wearing a mask, and this behavior is a manifestation of their disability, will not be excluded from school. Instructional and therapeutic interventions will continue.
- Additional PPE:
 - Additional safety precautions are required for school nurses and any staff supporting students with disabilities in close proximity, when distance is not possible.
 - Must include: eye protections and a mask/face covering
 - May also include: gloves, disposable gowns depending on duration of contact and possibility of coming into close contact with bodily fluids.
- Mask breaks: Breaks should occur when students can be six feet apart and ideally outside or with the windows open.
- [NPS Mask Policy](#)
- [NPS Face Coverings Protocol](#)

Physical Distancing:

- Classrooms will be arranged with the goal to maintain 6 feet distance between individuals when stationary for more than 10 minutes.
 - The 10-minute time frame is not consecutive — it is a total of 10 minutes over a 24-hour period to be considered a close contact.
 - It is expected that students will pass closer than 6 feet when getting to and from their seats.
- Assign students to specific seats.
- Teachers must be able to provide accurate, date specific information regarding seating arrangements in order to assist with contact tracing.
- Student storage spaces are spaced far enough apart and/or times of access are staggered to maintain physical distancing.
- School office spaces shall be configured so that workspaces are 6 feet apart.
- Recess: Consider designating outdoor spaces to separate cohorts and support physical distancing.
- Food consumption:
 - Students must be a minimum of 6 feet apart, more when feasible.
 - Students must be in designated seats that have been recorded by the teacher. The record should be available to be provided to health officials.
 - Masks should be put back on before a student leaves their seat.
 - Desks are wiped after eating.

Hygiene:

- Students and staff will wash / sanitize hands
 - upon arrival to school,
 - before eating,
 - after using bathroom,
 - after blowing nose/coughing/sneezing,
 - before putting on and taking off masks/face coverings,
 - before and after touching shared items,
 - before dismissal,
 - upon entering or leaving a recess space.
- Hand sanitizer will be placed by school entrances, key common areas, and in every classroom.
- Sharing materials is discouraged.
 - If materials are shared, they must be cleaned before being used by other students.

- Books and other paper-based materials are **not** considered high risk for transmission and do not need additional cleaning procedures.
- Office equipment that is shared should have sanitizer nearby and staff should wash or sanitize hands before and after use.

CLEANING AND DISINFECTING GUIDANCE:

- [Protocol: Cleaning and Disinfecting of School Buildings](#)
- Standard procedures for routine cleaning and disinfecting by the custodian should continue to be conducted in accordance with the [Newton Public School Custodial Procedures Manual](#).
- “High Touch” Areas and Items: clean and disinfect at least daily
 - Door knobs and handles
 - Stair rails
 - Classroom desks, tables and chairs
 - Lunchroom tables and chairs
 - Countertops
 - Handrails
 - Light switches
 - Bathroom surfaces
 - Handles on equipment (i.e., athletic equipment)
 - Locker Rooms
 - Push-buttons on vending machines and elevators
- Student Desks/Tables:
 - cleaned at least daily
 - if students move between classrooms, then cleaning takes place between classes
 - if meals are eaten at desks, then cleaning takes place before **and** after meals
- Bathrooms:
 - Clean and disinfect all bathroom surfaces twice per day.
 - Cleaning frequencies may need to be increased during times of full occupancy in the school and/or in high-traffic bathrooms.
- Electronics:
 - If shared, must be cleaned between uses.
 - Consider putting flat, wipeable cover on electronics that are difficult to clean (e.g., keyboards).
 - Use manufacturer’s instructions and/or alcohol-based wipes or sprays
- After Infection is identified:
 - clean and disinfect all areas used by the person who is sick
 - wear gloves when cleaning, wash hands after removing gloves

- Safety Precautions for Personnel after Infection is identified in building:
 - Staff should not touch their face while cleaning
 - Staff should wear uniforms and disposable gloves when cleaning and handling trash

Avoiding Exposure:

- Students and staff who are sick should not attend school in person.
- Students and staff are expected to use self-assessment tool every morning.
- All schools have designated a separate medical waiting room for students who have COVID-19 symptoms and are waiting to be picked up.
- School nurses will work with teachers on procedures for sending student to the health room.

INVESTIGATION AND CONTACT TRACING:

Communication Protocol - COVID Response

Process

- Newton HHS is notified of positive COVID-19 case and works closely with the school nurse and COVID team leader.
- Case investigation and contact tracing is done by Newton HHS or other public health authority. All activities during the infectious period, including interactions with students and staff beyond class/cohort, are considered when determining close contacts.
- All close contacts are identified and instructed to quarantine.

Close Contact definition:

- Someone who has been less than 6 feet from a COVID-19 case for at least 10-15 minutes during the case's infectious period, or
- Someone who has had direct contact with infectious secretions (e.g., being coughed on) while not wearing PPE.
- **Note: this is the entire definition of close contact that Newton HHS is using when doing contact tracing.**

Isolation: applies to someone who is infected with COVID-19

- Length of isolation: at least 10 days after symptom onset (or test date if asymptomatic) *and* 24 hours without a fever and symptoms have improved.

Quarantine: applies to someone who might have been exposed to COVID-19 (a close contact)

- Length of quarantine: 14 days from date of exposure

BUILDING CHECKLISTS

Building Checklist for Face Coverings and PPE:

- ☐ Are all staff and students wearing face coverings consistently and properly?
- ☐ Are the protocols for addressing non-compliance in mask wearing being followed?
- ☐ Are the staff who work with students who are excepted from the masking requirement provided with additional PPE such as face shields, goggles, gowns, and/or gloves, as appropriate?
- ☐ Are mask breaks occurring outdoors? If not, is there appropriate (e.g., sufficient physical distancing and air circulation) indoor space?
- ☐ Does the school have an easily accessible supply of back-up masks in the
 - main office?
 - classrooms?
 - health office?

Building Checklist for Physical Distancing:

- ☐ Do all classrooms and other spaces where staff work with students have seating spaced at a six-foot distance?
- ☐ For each classroom:
 - Is there a seating chart?
 - Is there a list of all staff who work within the classroom, the times they are in the classroom, and the students they serve when in the classroom?
 - Is there a record kept of close contacts, e.g., staff and students who are within 6 feet for a cumulative total of 10 minutes within a 24-hour time span?
- ☐ Is there adequate space or staggered access to assure physical distancing at student lockers?
- ☐ Is there a chart of student locker locations?
- ☐ Are all staff provided office space (where appropriate) that permits 6-foot physical distancing?
- ☐ Recess:
 - Are groups kept with their class cohort during recess?
- ☐ Snack / Lunch:
 - Are students 6 feet apart during snack / lunch?
 - Is there a snack / lunch seating chart?
 - Are there wipes or other cleaning supplies available to students to clean their desk / table after eating?

- ☐ Do staff have a space available for eating that meets the distancing and cleaning requirements (e.g., having wipes / cleaning supplies readily available to clean table before/after eating)?

Building Checklist for Hygiene:

- ☐ Is there hand sanitizer at every entrance?
- ☐ Is there hand sanitizer in every classroom?
- ☐ Are their cleaning and/or sanitizing supplies available in every classroom?
- ☐ Is there time built into the schedule for hand sanitizing at all designated times (arrival, dismissal, before/after putting on/taking off masks, before/after recess, before eating)?
- ☐ Materials:
 - Are there established routines for cleaning shared materials between students?
 - Are students provided individual sets of needed materials?
- ☐ Office equipment:
 - Is there hand sanitizer easily available near shared office equipment, e.g., copier, laminator?
 - Is there signage at equipment reminding staff to sanitize before and after use?
- ☐ Are high touch areas and items being cleaned and disinfected daily?
- ☐ Are student desks being cleaned and disinfected daily?
- ☐ Are electronics being cleaned and disinfected before and after each use?

Building Checklist for Avoiding Exposure:

- ☐ Is there a designated medical waiting room for students who have COVID-19 symptoms?
- ☐ Has the school nurse worked with teachers on procedures for sending students to the health room?
- ☐ Is there easy access to the self-assessment tool for both students and staff?
- ☐ Is there a communication protocol for when staff needs to quarantine?
- ☐ Is there a clear protocol for staff to use to inform administration if they need to be out either because they are symptomatic or if they have been identified as a close contact?