



## 2021/22 RETURN TO SCHOOL COVID-19 INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

### What COVID-19 precautions will be in place at the beginning of the 2021/22 School Year?

- Billings Public Schools will communicate and consult regularly with Yellowstone County Health Department, Yellowstone County Unified Health Command, and from our local medical experts as well as our local medical experts as the COVID-19 pandemic continues in our community. Our goal is for students to be able to attend school and for the doors of our schools to remain open throughout the course of the pandemic. We anticipate that adjustments will be necessary throughout the school year in order to make this goal a reality.
- The following prevention measures will continue until further notice:
  - Students and staff are encouraged to wash hands frequently with soap and water and use hand sanitizer often when soap and water are not available.
  - Additional cleaning and disinfection of surfaces will continue.
  - Students will be spaced/socially-distanced to the greatest extent possible within the school learning environment.
  - Use of physical barriers, such as a plastic barrier, will be encouraged.
  - Cohorting will occur as feasible.
  - Limit large groupings of students as feasible, utilizing the outdoors as much as possible
  - Food Services will continue to provide individual packaging of food as feasible.
  - Signage will continue to be displayed in buildings.
  - Students and staff experiencing symptoms of illness may not attend school and must adhere to the *BPS 2021/2022 COVID-19 ILLNESS PROTOCOL GUIDE*

### Is my child required to wear a mask/face covering?

- At this time, masking is required during the school day in all BPS facilities. Please provide a clean face mask/covering daily from home.
- Federal mandates require face masks to be worn while riding in school buses and other forms of school transportation.
- Billings Public Schools will continue to regularly communicate with our local health officials, and utilize the most recent Yellowstone County COVID-19 metrics to reassess the need for masking as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to unfold within our community.
- If your child is experiencing any symptoms of illness, please keep your child home and refer to the *2021/2022 COVID-19 ILLNESS PROTOCOL GUIDE* regarding COVID-19 testing recommendations and requirements for return to school.

### Will Billings Public Schools be performing contact tracing this year?

- All contact tracing at this time will take place through Riverstone Health.
- If the school is made aware of a confirmed case of COVID-19, and there is reason to believe that your child was exposed while at school or participating in an extracurricular activity, you will receive an 'Exposure Notification Notice' via email and will be requested to monitor your child closely for symptoms. Please ensure your current email address is in your child's PowerSchool information.

**If my child is quarantined as a “close contact” by Riverstone Health, when can my child return to school?**

- Please follow the instructions provided to you by Riverstone Health regarding your child’s quarantine. Your child may not attend in-person instruction or participate in extracurricular activities while quarantining as a close contact.
- In accordance with CDC and Riverstone Health directives, ideally, your child should quarantine for 14 days after the last exposure to the person who tested positive for COVID-19. The CDC offers two options to shorten quarantine **if your child has no symptoms**. Your child may end quarantine after 10 days without testing, or after 7 days (with return to school on day 8) if he/she tests negative from a PCR test taken on day 5 or later; or has a negative antigen test on day 7. You must continue to monitor your child for symptoms through day 14, following correct and strict mask usage, social distancing and all other hygiene measures. Quarantine cannot be ended earlier than day 7, even if your child has no symptoms.
- We respectfully request that if your child is quarantined as a close contact, please contact the school principal.

**Where can my child be tested?**

- We are providing free rapid antigen COVID-19 testing for BPS students, and BPS staff and their household members, at St. John’s United Laboratory, located at 502 N. 30th Street, Billings, (former downtown Gainans). Please make an appointment at [covidtest.stjohnsunitd.org](https://covidtest.stjohnsunitd.org) and be prepared to show a BPS student or staff identification badge at your appointment.
- Testing is also available at Riverstone Health, the Billings Clinic, St. Vincent’s Health Care, and other medical care providers.

**If my child has been vaccinated, will my child be required to quarantine if identified as a “close contact”?**

- Please follow the instructions provided to you by Riverstone Health. In accordance with Riverstone Health directives, your child is not required to quarantine if fully vaccinated AND your child does not develop COVID-19 symptoms following exposure. Your child should get tested 3-5 days after exposure and wear a mask indoors in public for 14 days after exposure or until the test result is negative.

**Will Billings Public Schools require COVID-19 immunizations?**

- Vaccination for COVID-19 is recommended for all age-eligible students and staff but not required. Please visit with your healthcare provider regarding any questions or concerns you may have regarding vaccination.
- Vaccination info from Riverstone Health can be accessed at the following link: <https://covid.riverstonehealth.org/> Click on the COVID-19 Vaccine Information link.
- Vaccinated individuals will follow the guidance of Riverstone Health in regards to close-contact quarantine.

**How will student absences be addressed during the 2021/22 School Year?**

- BPS will follow district absence policies. Excessive absences due to Covid concerns will be addressed on an individual basis. Documentation confirming any Covid-related concerns will be helpful in addressing these absence concerns.

**Where can I find information regarding COVID-19 numbers in Yellowstone County?**

- Riverstone Health provides weekly Tuesday updates:
  - Go to the Riverstone Covid page: <https://covid.riverstonehealth.org/>
  - Scroll down until you see a blue box in the middle of the screen that says “Yellowstone County Weekly Data Dashboard”. Click on the box.
  - This will bring up a screen that will show several status indicators reflecting the current situation in our county.
  - Scroll down the page until you see “Weekly Surveillance Data.” Click on the most recent reports for more detailed information on Covid cases in our community. .

**BPS COVID-19 information can be found on the Billings Public Schools website at the [COVID-19 Updates](#) link or the School Nurse page at <https://www.billingschools.org/school-nurse-health-services>**

8/18/2021 RC RN