*****Massachusetts Department of***

***Elementary and Secondary Education***

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| Jeffrey C. Riley*Commissioner* |  |

# MEMORANDUM

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| **To:** | Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education |
| **From:**  | Jeffrey C. Riley, Commissioner |
| **Date:**  | June 11, 2021  |
| **Subject:** | Update on COVID-19 Action Steps to Support Schools, Students, and Families |

Since our meeting on May 25, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department or DESE) has continued to inform districts of new developments related to COVID-19 and to support schools and districts as they bring more students into classrooms.

On May 27, the Department issued [updated COVID-19 guidance](https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/on-desktop/covid19-guide-updates.pdf) that included the following:

1. For the 2021-22 school year, all schools will be required to be in-person, full-time, five days a week, and all DESE health and safety requirements will be lifted, including distancing requirements.
* The Department will collaborate with the Department of Public Health (DPH) over the summeron any additional health and safety recommendations (such as whether any students will need to wear masks). The Department will provide updates to districts and schools as it receives them.
1. Districts will not be able to offer remote learning as a standard learning model during the 2021-22 school year.
2. For the remainder of the current school year, the health and safety requirements for K-12 schools will remain in effect, with the exception of outdoor masking.
* Students and staff are no longer required to wear masks during outdoor activities, including recess.
* The Department will not issue separate guidance for summer school programs. For summer programs, districts are encouraged to follow the health and safety guidance from DESE currently in place for in-person learning this spring.

The Department also issued [updated guidance on graduation ceremonies](https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/on-desktop/graduation-guide.pdf), which took effect on May 29 and reduces restrictions, in line with the Commonwealth’s updates.  On June 1, the Department posted an updated FAQ on off-site venues for graduations, stating that if schools hold graduation ceremonies off-site, they do not have to follow the Department’s graduation guidance. Instead, graduation ceremonies held off-site should comply with any safety standards set by that venue.

The June 1 FAQ also addressed contact tracing. The Department of Public Health recently updated its definition of a close contact, and as a result, students and staff are not considered close contacts when they are outdoors.

On May 28, Governor Baker announced that the [State of Emergency would end on June 15](https://www.mass.gov/news/governor-baker-issues-order-rescinding-covid-19-restrictions-on-may-29-and-terminating-state-of-emergency-effective-june-15).

We at the Department are grateful for all the work that schools, districts, families, communities, and members of this Board have done to support students during this very difficult school year.

Attachments:

* [Updates to DESE COVID-19 Guidance – May 27, 2021](https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/on-desktop/covid19-guide-updates.pdf)
* [DESE COVID-19 Safety Standards for K-12 Graduation Ceremonies – Effective May 29, 2021](https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/on-desktop/graduation-guide.pdf)
* [June 1, 2021 Installment of FAQs (about contact tracing and off-site venues for graduations)](https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/faq/2021-0601faq-installment.docx) *(download)*