*****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:**  | December 7, 2021  |
| **Subject:** | Update on COVID-19 Action Steps to Support Schools, Students, and Families |

Since our meeting on October 19, 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 navigate teaching and learning during the pandemic.

On October 25, DESE issued a new FAQ about not requiring negative COVID-19 tests for students to return to school after holidays or vacations, doing visual check-ins with students who may be learning via livestream while quarantining, and not including asymptomatic, fully vaccinated individuals in Test and Stay programs.

On October 26, DESE announced that after consulting with medical experts and state health officials, the mask requirement in all K-12 public schools is extended through at least January 15, 2022. The Department will continue to work with medical experts and state health officials to evaluate the mask requirement beyond January 15.

On October 28, as a COVID-19 vaccine for ages 5-11 moved closer to approval, DESE and the Department of Public Health sent a [letter to school and district leaders](https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/on-desktop/2021-1028pediatric-vaccination.pdf) to encourage them to actively promote COVID-19 vaccinations for children ages 5-11 when such vaccinations become available. The two departments also included a template [letter to families](https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/on-desktop/pediatric-vaccination-letter/), which is available in multiple languages. Vaccinations for children ages 5-11 became available in Massachusetts as of November 2.

On November 12, DESE, the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC), and the Department of Public Health announced a policy through which schools, with parental consent, can share students’ COVID-19 Test-and-Stay results with out-of-school-time programs licensed by EEC. This will allow close contacts to continue attending their before- or after-school program as long the students’ test results are negative.

The Department has continued issuing FAQs, including one on November 8 about pooled testing during short school weeks and one on November 18 that addressed both what to do if a school experiences a concerning increase in cases and changes in protocols for children ages 5–11 who are now eligible for the vaccine.

The Department continues to hold webinars and release additional resources on [COVID-19 testing](https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/testing/default.html) and other matters. As always, the DESE COVID-19 Help Center remains open and available for consultation with districts and schools.

Attachments:

* [October 25, 2021 Installment of FAQs (about returning from holidays, quarantining at home, and Test and Stay)](https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/faq/2021-1025faq-installment.docx) *(download)*
* [Extension of DESE Mask Requirement](https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/on-desktop/2021-1026mask-requirement-extension.pdf) — October 26, 2021
	+ Press release: [Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Commissioner Riley Extends Mask Requirement in Schools](https://mailchi.mp/doe.mass.edu/press-release-i6d5p52m94) **– October 26, 2021**
* [Preparing for a Pediatric COVID-19 Vaccine](https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/on-desktop/2021-1028pediatric-vaccination.pdf) – October 28, 2021
	+ [Letter to Families](https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/on-desktop/pediatric-vaccination-letter/) – October 28, 2021
* [November 8, 2021 Installment of FAQs (about pooled testing during short school weeks)](https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/faq/2021-1108faq-installment.docx) *(download)*
* [Test and Stay Coordination between School Districts and Out-of-School-Time Programs](https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/testing/2021-1112coordination.pptx) *(download)* – November 12, 2021
* [November 18, 2021 Installment of FAQs (about what to do if a school experiences a concerning increase in cases, and changes in protocols for children ages 5–11 who are now eligible for the vaccine)](https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/faq/2021-1118faq-installment.docx) *(download)*

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