

SUMMARY:

INFORMATION SHARING ON COVID-19 CASES FOR SCHOOLS AND LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH

Given the need to notify potentially exposed individuals timely, and given the public's expectation of ongoing information, the following guidance is meant to assist schools in information sharing. Below, we provide summary guidance and considerations for sharing case information related to school settings.

SCHOOLS AND LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH - INTERNAL SHARING OF INFORMATION

- State and local public health staff are authorized to disclose the name of a COVID-positive student, teacher, or other staff member to the person's school if disclosure is necessary to conduct the disease investigation and institute control measures.
- Schools are authorized to disclose the names of a COVID-19 positive student, teacher, other staff member, and case contacts to state and local public health officials.
- Please see the attached legal memo that will provide more extensive detail and legal analysis.
<https://bit.ly/3hwwOMY>

SCHOOLS AND LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH - SHARING INFORMATION WITH THE PUBLIC

- Federal and state laws generally prohibit public health and school officials from disclosing identifying information about positive COVID-19 cases in a public manner.
- Local public health officials should not release information to the public about cases at school settings, similar to how they do not release this information for outbreaks at businesses. See confidentiality provisions in Iowa Code Section 139A.3(2).
- Schools should work to notify the school community experiencing cases in order to protect students' health, and should follow long-standing requirements for infectious disease notifications.
- If schools choose to share case information further with the public, such as via public dashboards, they should make considerations to protect the confidentiality of students in the school setting:
 - Release case counts only when there are 100 or more total students in the student population at a location
 - Schools that have no cases can report zero cases
 - Schools with counts of 6 or more cases can release specific case counts
 - Schools with 5 or fewer cases should not provide a specific count, but can confirm there are cases within the school population
 - No other demographic identifiers should be included in the school-level release
- Local public health and school officials should contact their legal counsel in determining the nature and scope of information to provide in order to find the appropriate balance of protecting the public while protecting the privacy of individual students and staff, as well as the health of the educational community as a whole.

LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH - SHARING ZIP CODE LEVEL DATA

- Case counts can be released by state or local public health by zip codes if 100 or more people reside in the zip code under the following circumstances:
 - Zeros can be released
 - Counts of 6 or greater can be released
 - Counts of 1 through 5 should be suppressed and identified only as having between 1 and 5 cases (no individual counts given)
 - No other demographic identifiers are included in the zip-code level release

STATE REPORTING OF SCHOOL CASES - SUMMARY

While local public health and schools have long-standing and effective reporting community notification processes, we understand this situation is different. We continue to monitor the situation and stand ready to change this approach if the need arises.

