



Jeffrey C. Riley  
Commissioner

# Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

75 Pleasant Street, Malden, Massachusetts 02148-4906

Telephone: (781) 338-3000  
TTY: N.E.T. Relay 1-800-439-2370

## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Superintendents, Charter School Leaders, Collaborative Leaders, and  
Approached Special Education Schools Leaders  
**From:** Jeffrey C. Riley, Commissioner  
**Date:** September 11, 2020  
**Subject:** DESE Reporting Requirement for Positive COVID-19 Cases in Schools and  
Districts and Mobile Response Unit Overview

Schools and districts across the state are working to implement the health and safety guidelines developed by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) for in-person or hybrid schooling models. To further support the health and safety of students and staff, **DESE is requiring the superintendent, charter school leader, or their designee to inform DESE when they learn that a student or staff member has tested positive for COVID-19.** As described below, this report will not include personally identifiable information. This reporting is in addition to the required steps outlined in [Protocols for Responding to COVID-19 Scenarios](#).

While DESE will not play a formal role in tracking or monitoring cases at a local or statewide level, this information will allow DESE to provide support to local officials, in consultation with local public health authorities, and to monitor statewide trends.

**Effective Monday, September 14, whenever a positive COVID-19 case occurs, districts and schools must call the DESE Rapid Response Help Center at 781.338.3500 to report the case.**

This memo is intended to provide schools and districts with an overview of the process and reporting requirements for positive cases and provides considerations regarding staff and student privacy. We also restate the minimum conditions for utilizing the state's mobile response units in response to positive cases.

### *Process and Required DESE Reporting Protocol for Positive COVID-19 Cases*

1. The district or school is notified by a staff member (or their designee) or student (or their guardian) that the **student or staff member has tested positive for COVID-19.**
2. The proper school official, as predetermined by the superintendent or school leader, contacts the **DESE Rapid Response Help Center at 781.338.3500 and reports the positive case. No personally identifiable information will be shared.**
  - a. **Required reporting information**

- i. Identify known positive case as staff member or student
  - ii. Student: Grade level
  - iii. Staff: Whether individual is an educator or support staff
  - iv. District and school name
  - v. Reporting person's name
  - vi. Reporting person's contact information (email and phone number)
3. DESE intake specialist logs information into the DESE COVID-19 tracking system.\*
4. DESE monitors the information coming in from all districts several times per day.
5. DESE contacts the district or school within 24 hours and provides any identified next steps to support the district or school.

\*Important: The data collected in this process is self-reported by the reporting person from the district or school.

### *Mobile Rapid Response Unit Program Overview*

The purpose of the mobile rapid response unit is to provide testing of asymptomatic individuals who are not known to be a close contact when there is evidence that COVID-19 transmission may have occurred within a classroom or school within the past 14 days. (Close contacts of someone diagnosed with COVID-19 and symptomatic individuals would not be at school and would be tested through their health care provider or a COVID-19 testing site.)

The following describes minimum conditions when a mobile rapid response team may be deployed:

- Within a 14-day period, if two or more individuals within a single classroom test positive for COVID-19 and transmission/exposure is likely to have occurred in the classroom, a mobile rapid response unit may be deployed for all asymptomatic individuals within that classroom.
- Within a 14-day period, if 3 or more individuals or 3 percent, whichever is greater, of a given grade or cohort test positive for COVID-19 and transmission/exposure likely occurred in the school, a mobile rapid response unit may be deployed for all asymptomatic individuals in that grade or cohort.
- Within a 14-day period, if more than 3 percent of a school tests positive for COVID-19 and transmission/exposure likely occurred in the school, a mobile testing unit may be deployed for the entire school population that is asymptomatic.
- Within a 14-day period, if two or more individuals within the same bus test positive for COVID-19 and transmission/exposure likely occurred on the bus, a mobile rapid response unit may be deployed for all asymptomatic individuals on that bus.

Additional guidance for how to request a mobile rapid response unit can be found in the **Protocols for Requesting Mobile Rapid Response Units** (document to be released September 11, 2020).