



## Vermont's Pediatricians Support Updated School Contact Tracing Guidance

**October 21<sup>st</sup>, 2021** - Vermont pediatricians and pediatric infectious diseases experts support the revised school contact tracing [guidance](#) issued October 21<sup>st</sup>, 2021. This guidance was developed with the input of Vermont pediatricians and other health care professionals to minimize disruptions to in-person learning while limiting in-school transmission of SARS-CoV-2.

The Delta variant has led to an ongoing surge of COVID-19 throughout Vermont, resulting in more cases in Vermont's preK-12 schools. Unvaccinated close contacts of SARS-CoV-2-infected staff and students are required to quarantine at home, leading to significant missed school days for children, and in some cases, even school closures in Vermont.

Transmission of SARS-CoV-2 occurs at a lower rate in the school setting compared to settings outside of the school environment. Mitigation measures, such as universal masking and staying home when sick, are effective measures and contribute to lower secondary attack rates of COVID-19 in the school setting. Pediatricians agree with aligning Vermont's definition of close contacts with that of the CDC to more precisely identify those students at highest risk for infection following in-school exposure while minimizing quarantines for low-risk, asymptomatic students.

Other states using similar contact tracing guidance have not seen increased in-school transmission. For example, Massachusetts schools have seen a [very low](#) test positivity rate in their Test To Stay program despite eliminating contact tracing on busses and using a cut-off of 3 feet rather than 6 feet to identify close contacts. These reassuring data helped inform the changes to Vermont's guidance.

Students and staff with signs or symptoms of illness, should follow COVID-19 in Pediatric Patients Triage, Evaluation, Testing and Return to School [guidelines](#).

AAPVT continues to recommend universal masking in schools regardless of vaccination status or school vaccination rate until those under 12 years of age have had the opportunity to be vaccinated and local epidemiologic data indicate substantially lower rates of COVID-19 transmission.

AAPVT will continue to work closely with state agencies, school nurses and school leaders to develop solutions that allow students to attend school safely while minimizing transmission of COVID-19.