

# COVID-19 Operating Protocols

Updated January 7, 2022



If you have input regarding the COVID-19 Operating Procedures, please email [studentservices@btcs.org](mailto:studentservices@btcs.org).

## Recent Updates

**12-29-21 – Included new isolation and quarantine timelines to reflect updated CDC recommendations.**

**1-5-22 Note: This guidance applies in K-12 settings as well as the general population.**

## COVID-19 Disclaimer

Even though BTCS is taking numerous steps to minimize risks associated with COVID-19, we cannot guarantee a risk-free environment during a global pandemic. Therefore, those entering district facilities assume and accept any risks associated with being present in a building occupied by students, staff, visitors, and faculty members.

## Personal Protective Equipment and Hand Washing

The use of personal protective equipment is designed to create layers of redundancy, recognizing students are unlikely to maintain full compliance at all times. They are designed to minimize the risk of transmission as much as possible while still allowing for feasibility, flexibility, and ease of use.

- Masks are recommended but not required in school facilities and transportation.
- Legislation passed by the governor on November 12, 2021 no longer requires masks to be worn by students and staff on buses. However, it is recommended for students and staff to wear a face mask.
- Masks may be homemade or disposable and should be worn to cover both the mouth and nose.
- Teachers will train/reinforce respiratory etiquette (covering coughs and sneezes) to prevent the spread of illness and COVID-19.
- Social distancing measures are recommended wherever possible.
- Students and staff should have scheduled handwashing with soap and water or use hand sanitizer every 2 to 3 hours when practical.
- Students and staff should regularly wash their hands or use hand sanitizer before every meal and as students enter every classroom. Staff should wash their hands or use hand sanitizer every time a new group of students enters their room.

## Class Size & Spacing Recommendations

The use of physical distancing measures is designed to create layers of redundancy, recognizing students are unlikely to maintain full compliance at all times. They are designed to minimize the risk of transmission as much as possible while still allowing for feasibility, flexibility, and ease of use.

- Seating charts will be maintained to limit contacts in classrooms, on buses, in the cafeteria, and in after-school programs.
- Seating arrangements will be designed to cohort students and/or to social distance 3 to 6 feet wherever possible.

- Students participating in related arts classes (band, music, PE, library, art, guidance, STEAM, etc.) should social distance as much as possible.
- Teachers should use all appropriate green spaces/play areas when taking students outside to help support social distancing in grade-level cohorts (grades PK-8).

## **Movement Operations**

- Flow of foot traffic will be monitored and staggered wherever possible.
- Clinic traffic will be minimized to allow for less potential exposures and decreased hallway traffic.
- Student visits to school clinics will be limited to necessary referrals to minimize potential exposures and decrease hallway traffic.

## **Procedure for Screening Students and Staff**

- Families should monitor their child and staff should self-monitor for a temperature greater than 100.0, cough, congestion, shortness of breath, gastrointestinal symptoms, loss of taste or smell, sore throat, headache, or body aches each day. If any of these symptoms are present for students or staff, please follow the COVID-19 Return to School Protocols and the COVID-19 Return to Work Protocols.
- Any student/staff who is assessed by the BTCS school nurse, reports having symptoms consistent with COVID-19, or diagnosed with COVID-19 will follow the COVID-19 Return to School Protocols and the COVID-19 Return to Work Protocols.
- Students who develop a fever greater than 100.0 or become ill at school will be kept in a designated area of isolation and provided a surgical mask until they can be transported off-campus. They should be transported by their parents or ambulance if clinically unstable for off-site testing and medical evaluation. If the student is 16 years of age or older, drove to school, and is well enough to drive home, they may do so with verbal parent permission.
- Students/staff who are kept home or sent home for illness will be required to follow the COVID-19 Return to School Protocols and the COVID-19 Return to Work Protocols.
- Students who are in isolation or quarantine due to testing positive for COVID-19 or being identified as a contact to a positive case are eligible to be counted present through temporary homebound status by completing assignments/coursework at home as agreed upon with the child's teacher. Parents should contact the school office to report the isolation/quarantine in order to begin temporary homebound status.
- When students/staff return to school following an illness, they should check in with the school administration to ensure proper communication with health officials.
- Bristol Tennessee City Schools will offer free, COVID-19 testing for students and staff members. The testing will be available in school clinics during school hours and at the BTCS Administration Building, Monday through Friday, from 2 to 4 p.m. by appointment only. Click [here](#) for additional information regarding COVID-19 testing.

## **Testing for COVID-19**

- Bristol Tennessee City Schools will offer FREE, COVID-19 testing for students and staff members who meet the criteria to be tested.
- We will use a viral test, known as an antigen (rapid) test, which returns a result in as little as 15 minutes. The test will involve using a nasal cotton swab placed inside the tip of the nose. The test is not painful. We do not use the longer swabs that reach higher into the nose. This test will tell if you have a current COVID-19 infection, regardless of whether you have symptoms.

- Testing will be conducted by nurses at each school’s clinic during school hours. Students will not be tested without parental consent. Please complete the [Online Consent Form](#). Parents will be given the option to be present during testing; however, it is not required. Even with written consent on file, parental consent will always be confirmed before a test is administered.
- Students/staff who qualify for testing on school sites include:
  - Symptomatic students and staff (vaccinated or unvaccinated) **who are already on-site and become ill during the school day.**
  - Asymptomatic, fully vaccinated non-household contacts test on day 5 after contact.
  - If the contact cannot separate from the case in the home, they should get tested 5 days after initial exposure to the case and again 5 days after the end of the case’s isolation. The contact should wear a mask indoors in public for 10 days following last exposure or until test results are negative. If they test positive, they must isolate.
- **Drive-thru testing** will also be available at the BTCS Administration Building, Monday through Friday, from 2 to 4 p.m. **by appointment only.** This is for students or staff who are at home sick or for those who are in quarantine and test on day 5 to return on school/activities on day 6 if they remain asymptomatic. The Administration building is located at 615 Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard. Drive-thru testing will take place on the lower level under the walkway at the double glass doors at the rear of the building.
- To schedule an online appointment for a drive-thru test at the BTCS Administration Building, you may call the **COVID-19 Testing Appointment Line at (423) 793-7911, Monday through Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.** Appointments may be scheduled up to five days in advance.
- Parents/guardians will be required to show a government-issued photo ID (i.e. driver’s license) prior to their child being tested at the BTCS Administration Building. However, we recognize it may not always be possible for the parents/guardians to be present. Therefore, on the consent form, parents/guardians will be asked to provide names of other individuals who have consent to bring their child for testing. The adult who accompanies the child will be required to show a photo ID.
- Click [here](#) for information on additional COVID-19 testing sites in our area.

## Responding to a Positive Case/Quarantine & Contact Tracing

The Sullivan County Regional Health Department (SCRHD) will conduct contact tracing to ensure positive cases are investigated and their contacts identified. If COVID-19 is widespread in the community, there may be a delay in identifying close contacts. Therefore, we encourage families to take steps to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19. BTCS will use [guidelines from the Tennessee Department of Health](#) for releasing cases and contacts from isolation and quarantine.

### Parent/Staff Notifications of Positive Case

- Parents with students who test positive for COVID-19 must contact the school to begin temporary homebound status and follow the Return to School Protocols.
- Staff members who test positive for COVID-19 must notify their immediate supervisor and follow the COVID-19 Return to Work Protocols.
- Parents should notify the school if their child is identified by the health department as a close contact who must quarantine to initiate homebound status. Students should follow the Return to School Protocols once identified as a close contact.
- Home test results should be shared with the school nurse and results emailed to the SCRHD in order to initiate contact tracing. Please send an email to [COVIDlabs@sullivanhealth.org](mailto:COVIDlabs@sullivanhealth.org) that includes: a picture of the test results, a picture of test packaging, the student’s/staff’s full name, date of birth, gender, address, and phone number. Testing completed at health care facilities, including BTCS testing sites, will automatically populate in the Tennessee Department of Health network for contact tracing.

- Using information collected from the positive student's or staff member's test, an Intake Form will be completed by the school nurse or designee of each positive case of a student or staff member and a return to school date will be calculated and communicated by Bristol Tennessee City Schools.

### **Parent/Staff Notification of Close Contact**

- Parents are encouraged to self-identify their child with the school nurse if they are aware their child is a close contact. Notifying the school will initiate Temporary Homebound status.
- Individuals who have been around the positive case within the last 48 hours prior to either the positive case's symptom-onset date or test date (asymptomatic individual) and were within 6 feet for longer than 15 minutes will be considered a close contact. In the K-12 indoor classroom setting, the close contact definition excludes individuals if both the infected individual and the exposed individual(s) correctly and consistently wore well-fitting masks the entire time.
- Students who are close contacts and vaccinated are not required to quarantine as long as they remain asymptomatic. The CDC considers children ages 12-17 vaccinated who have completed the primary two-dose series of the COVID-19 vaccine, therefore all students who have received the primary two dose series will be considered fully vaccinated for quarantine recommendation purposes.
- Unvaccinated close contacts should quarantine based on guidelines in the return to school document.

### **Health Department & BTCS Notification**

- Sporadic Cases – The SCRHD will communicate close contact for individual cases. Close contacts should contact the school to begin Temporary Homebound status.
- Our school district provides access to any information that will help to identify contacts of a case, including seating charts for all the student's classes, breakfast, lunch, bus, etc. In addition, extracurricular activities (sports teams, band, LEAPs, other before/after school programs, etc.) are provided. (FERPA - 20 U.S.C. § 1232g(b)(1)(I); 34 C.F.R. §§ 99.31(a)(10) and 99.36).
- Testing completed at health care facilities, including BTCS testing sites, will automatically populate in the Tennessee Department of Health's network to initiate contact tracing. In order for a home test to be included in contact tracing, you must email [COVIDlabs@sullivanhealth.org](mailto:COVIDlabs@sullivanhealth.org) the following information: a picture of the test results, a picture of test packaging, the student's/staff's full name, date of birth, gender address, and phone number.
- Clusters of positive cases – If a cluster of positive cases is identified in a classroom, grade-level, or group, BTCS will notify parents of possible exposure based on the number of cases. Parents will then have the option for their child to voluntarily quarantine and initiate Temporary Homebound status or return to school and monitor for symptoms.
- In some instances, BTCS may work with the SCRHD to quarantine all students (in a classroom, grade-level, or group) associated with a cluster. When this happens, BTCS will notify families and exclude the impacted students from school. The SCRHD will follow-up with a phone call or text to families within 24 hours with additional information. Due to the overwhelming number of cases, this could be delayed.

### **Public Notification of Positive Cases**

- All positive cases of COVID-19 within the district will be posted daily (student attendance days only) by 4 p.m. on the COVID-19 Dashboard, available on the district's website.

## **Temporary Homebound Status for Isolation/Quarantine**

- Students in isolation/quarantine due to COVID-19 are permitted to transition to temporary homebound status and be counted present for the school day by meeting daily attendance criteria.

- The Sullivan County Regional Health Department (SCRHD) will attempt to notify parents of isolation/quarantine due to COVID-19 and conduct all contact tracing.
- Upon notification that a student is in quarantine/isolation due to a positive COVID-19 test, the parent should contact the school to initiate homebound.

### **Attendance Criteria**

Teachers will work with individual families to determine the best methods for instruction and assignment completion.

Daily participation may include:

- Teacher contact with student
- Teacher contact with the parent/guardian (as appropriate by the age of the student)
- Participation in synchronous, asynchronous, and independent instruction
- Virtual instruction attendance log through Canvas
- Student work completion through Canvas

*Students in isolation due to COVID-19 who may be too sick to complete daily assignments will be given up to 10 school days upon return to complete coursework.*

## **School Visitors**

- Elective events held after-school hours such as PTA activities, Open Houses, sporting events, etc. are open to visitors.
- Visitors should self-monitor prior to arrival for a temperature greater than 100.0, cough, congestion, shortness of breath, gastrointestinal symptoms, loss of taste or smell, sore throat, headache, or body aches each day. If any of these symptoms are present, the visitor should not enter the building, and the appointment should be rescheduled.
- Visitors are not permitted to sit/eat with students during mealtimes.
- Visitors should wash or sanitize hands prior to entering, must practice social distancing, and are strongly encouraged to wear face masks.
- A record will be kept, including the day, time, and location of non-school employees visiting the building.
- Public use of facilities is allowed after 6 p.m., all day Saturday, with no use on Sunday. Viking Hall and Tennessee Middle School are currently excluded from public use at this time.

## **Dining**

- Students and staff will wash hands or use hand sanitizer before and after every meal.
- Mask wearing is strongly recommended when moving through the food service line.
- Service lines will be disinfected and wiped down between groups.
- Serving and cafeteria staff will use sneeze guard protection on services lines.
- Meal times may be staggered wherever possible to create seating arrangements that support social distancing between students.
- School-supplied meals will be served through the serving areas with disposable utensils and food trays.

## **Gatherings and Extracurricular Activities**

- It is strongly recommended that staff, students, and visitors wear face masks while attending district events. If any attendee is experiencing symptoms of cough, congestion, shortness of breath, diarrhea, abdominal pain,

malaise (general feeling of discomfort), fatigue, rash, and loss of taste or smell, they will be asked to leave/not enter the premises and should seek appropriate medical guidance.

- Assemblies are allowed indoors as long as students are socially distanced to the extent possible.
- Visitors may attend assemblies/event during the day upon invitation by school officials as long as social distancing guidelines and COVID-19 Operating Procedures are followed. In lieu of in-person events, schools may offer livestreaming of events if able.
- Field trips will be approved on an individual basis as in years past. Chaperones are permitted with principal approval.
- Field trips and extracurricular activities may continue as long as bus transportation is provided. Mask wearing on buses is recommended throughout the transport period per federal guidelines Section 361 of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 264) and 42 Code of Federal Regulations 70.2, 71.31(b), 71.32(b).
- Activities may be discontinued based on case rates and community transmission.
- Before- and after-school-sponsored programs may continue with frequent hand washing, hand sanitizing, and social distancing.
- Outdoor recommendations for people who are not fully vaccinated include wearing a mask in a crowded outdoor setting or during activities that involve sustained close contact with other people. Fully vaccinated people might choose to wear a mask in crowded outdoor settings if they or someone in their household is immunocompromised.

## **Athletic Activities & Other Events**

- The above protocols apply to all athletic activities and extracurricular programs. Athletic activities will also follow all applicable TSSAA, Sullivan County Regional Health Department, and First Region Superintendents Study Council regulations.

## **Cleaning**

- Frequently touched surfaces, including lights, doors, benches, bathrooms, etc., will undergo cleaning with an EPA-approved disinfectant at least twice daily.
- School campuses will undergo normal cleaning on a daily basis.
- Routine cleaning with standard soap and water removes germs and dirt and lowers the risk of spreading SARS-CoV-2.
- Physical education equipment will be cleaned with an EPA-approved disinfectant between class changes.
- When a student or staff member becomes ill with symptoms of COVID-19, cleaning and disinfection of affected spaces will be directed by the school administration in adherence to the BTCS protocols for disinfecting student-occupied spaces.

### **Cleaning Specific to School Clinics**

- Clinics will be deep-cleaned a minimum of twice daily, midday and end of shift.
- Staff will perform additional disinfecting of more frequently touched surfaces and equipment throughout the day as possible.
- Periodic cleaning of high-touch areas will be done as often as possible.
- Surfaces in contact will be wiped down between each student visit.
- Clinic may need to be closed based on cleaning needs.
- Proper PPE should be worn per manufacturer instructions.

## **Busing and Student Transportation**

- Legislation passed by the governor on November 12, 2021, no longer requires masks to be worn by students and staff on buses. However, it is recommended for students and staff to wear a face mask.
- Windows should be open when possible and conditions allow. Bus drivers will utilize assigned seating to provide a more orderly environment.
- Seats and handrails will be wiped down with an EPA-approved disinfectant between routes.

## Ventilation & Healthy Facilities

BTCS has taken numerous measures to ensure the air quality in buildings exceeds standards while reducing the spread of COVID-19 particles.

- Prior to the pandemic, BTCS exceeded the American Society of Heating and Refrigeration Engineers (ASHRAE) standards and building codes regarding introducing fresh air into schools.
- During the pandemic, BTCS has met or exceeded ASHREA and CDC recommendations for ventilation.
- The HVAC units in occupied spaces are run 24 hours a day for seven days a week to maximize the air changes and dilute the interior air as recommended by ASHREA and CDC.
- Filters are changed on a more frequent basis than pre-pandemic. Special attention is given to filters in areas of suspected COVID-19 exposures. The filters in the HVAC units have the highest MERV rating possible before causing operational issues with the HVAC unit to maximize filtration.
- Air purification machines were installed in the majority of the HVAC units with the goal to reduce airborne particulate and viruses, including COVID-19. These machines have been tested using UL, EPA, and ASHREA standards. These machines generate no ozone and do not create any off gases that could be unpleasant or harmful to staff or students. Additional units are being purchased to provide air purification in all student-occupied spaces.
- Opening classroom windows and doors to provide additional ventilation is recommended by the CDC.
- Windows on buses should be open when possible and conditions allow.
- BTCS continues to partner with the Sullivan County Regional Health Department to offer vaccination clinics to students, staff, and families in order to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

## Serving Medically Vulnerable Students/Staff and Student with Disabilities

Understandably, a key concern is whether certain populations of students, teachers, and other school-based employees may be at increased risk of infection and severe disease by attending school in person. According to the Centers for Disease Control, some people are more likely than others to become severely ill should they contract COVID-19:

- Risk for severe illness increases with age; and/or
- People of all ages with certain underlying medical conditions, particularly if not well controlled.

Parents should consult medical professionals regarding the risk associated with any underlying conditions of their child. Parents with medically vulnerable students may elect to register for Tennessee Online Public School (TOPS), a fully virtually K-12 option for BTCS students. For questions or concerns regarding medically-fragile students, students with IEPs, and schooling options, please contact BTCS Student Services at (423) 652-9233. Ultimately, individual decisions to attend school in-person or register for TOPS are left to parents.

Medically Vulnerable Staff:

- If they choose to do so, staff may self-identify as having a high-risk medical condition to the Human Resources department.
- Human Resources will work with staff on potential options.

## Counseling Services

Counseling services are available to all BTCS students via a variety of methods. Services are available from our school counselors at school locations along with contracted counseling services in partnership with local agencies. In a crisis event, please be aware of the resources that are available. Local resources for families can be found by contacting the BTCS Family Resource Center at **(423) 652-9223**. If you or a family member is in a mental health crisis, please call the Frontier Health Mobile Crisis Response Team at **1-877-928-9062**. To report suspected child abuse or neglect, call **1-877-237-0004**. If you are in crisis and want to speak with someone immediately, contact the National Suicide Prevention Hotline at **1-800-273-8255** or text "Home" to **741-741**.

For students meeting with counselors in-person:

- The counseling office will be arranged so the counselor and student will have as much space between them as possible.
- Counselors will try to maintain a minimum six feet of spacing between themselves and students as much as possible.
- Students should try to maintain a minimum six of spacing between themselves and the counselor.



# COVID-19 Significant Spread Protocols

Updated 11/14/21



All *COVID-19 Operating Procedures* are designed to mitigate COVID-19 while limiting disruptions to person-to-person learning for as many students as possible. With the quick rise in COVID-19 cases due to the Delta variant, BTCS strengthened our efforts throughout the district to mitigate the spread of the virus in our schools. Measures are also now in place that will allow us to implement by updating our COVID-19 Operating Procedures. In addition, even more stringent temporary protocols are available for use should they be deemed necessary district-wide based on community spread or in locations in our district experiencing a significant number of cases or community spread. Utilizing this “triage” approach will allow district administration to consider multiple factors when implementing Significant Spread Protocols in addition to our COVID-19 Operating Procedures. These Significant Spread Protocols are designed to be temporary until a significant decrease in COVID-19 is evidenced.

## Procedures for Significant Spread

- Cleaning touch surfaces will increase in frequency to between classes, playgrounds will be disinfected daily, and hand sanitizing will occur as students enter the building or exit buses.
- Efforts will be taken to minimize the number of persons in the hallways by staggering movements at incremental intervals and traveling in cohorts. Foot traffic will be directed in only one direction, where possible, or hallways will be divided with either side following the same direction with an increased measure to social distance.
- Multiple spaces, including classrooms, may be utilized for social distancing during dining.
- Large-scale assemblies will be discontinued, and before/after school activities may be canceled by school administration. Assemblies of less than 50 students at a time are discouraged but allowed as long as social distancing measures are implemented.
- Off-site field trips are discontinued unless approved by the Director of Schools.
- Elective events/activities held after school hours are permissible by students, staff and visitors (i.e. PTA activities, Open Houses, sporting events, etc).
- After-school activities may be discontinued based on case rates and community transmission.
- Visitors are not permitted in the school building during the day except under extenuating circumstances.
- Public use of indoor facilities will be closed at any school site implementing Significant Spread Protocols. Viking Hall and Tennessee Middle School are currently excluded from public use at this time.
- If deemed necessary, the school district can apply for a seven-day waiver to the state and immediately transition a class, grade level, or school to remote learning. Waivers are not permitted to be implemented district-wide. Approved waivers provide up to a seven-day shift to virtual learning when the number of staff and/or student absences makes it difficult to continue in-person learning and school operations. Students are expected to participate in virtual learning based on the hours of their regular school day.
- The decision to cancel instruction is not made lightly. Before considering closing all schools across the district, all mitigation strategies and alternatives will be considered. During a closure, inclement weather/emergency closure days would be utilized. Should a district-wide closure be warranted, the district must utilize stockpiled inclement weather/emergency closure days. There is no instruction during a district-wide emergency closure.
- A temporary 14-day mask mandate can be implemented by the school district provided all conditions below exist:

1. The school principal must request in writing to place the school under a mask mandate.
2. Severe conditions must exist: the governor must declare a state of emergency and Sullivan County must have an average rolling 14-day COVID-19 infection rate of at least one thousand (1,000) new known infections for every one hundred thousand (100,000) residents of the county.
3. The Bristol Tennessee City Schools Board of Education must enact a mask mandate policy for a 14-day period on a school-by-school or campus-by-campus situation. This statute will be the only method a district may use to mandate face coverings.
4. The school must provide persons twelve (12) and older with an N95-rated mask.
5. The school must provide persons under twelve (12) but over five (5) years of age with a face covering that provides air filtration similar to an N95-rated mask.

\*Protocols are subject to change based on community spread of COVID-19 and changes to public health recommendations.