

Thank you for all your thoughtful questions generated during our Town Hall together. Responses from Dr. Breena Holmes and Sharonlee Trefry are summarized below. We are writing this book together, stay in touch. There are many unknowns; answers from today may change tomorrow! Responses to the questions from the Town Hall Meeting are summarized according to categories below:

Advocacy

How to get to the table when you don't feel heard?

School nurses can learn from their colleagues on how to prepare a message and meet with their administration. School administrators want to know what is needed and what are some ways to move towards that goal. Make a list, prioritize, be brief, schedule a follow up visit and leave them wanting more information. Most of all, approach with a sense of partnership and good will. We all want to be safe and healthy. Seek partnership with local pediatricians, VDH staff and other child health advocates.

Care, Monitoring & Training of School Personnel

What about "compromised" school nurses? Or teachers?

School personnel with underlying health conditions will need to work with their employers to identify safe accommodations, or reassignments or alternative employment in accordance with [General Unemployment Insurance](#); [People Who Are at Higher Risk for Severe Illness](#)

Will that VOSHA training be required for school staff?

It is recommended that all employers comply with Vermont Occupational Safety and Health Administration (VOSHA) as a first line of defense against rising costs of ill personnel and to reduce illness and injury in the workplace. The link to VOSHA training is here:

<https://labor.vermont.gov/vermont-occupational-safety-and-health-administration-vosha>

VDH will keep you up to date on the state requirements for Restarting VT

Will professional development be provided for re-entry to school be offered ahead of time?

Yes, in collaboration with school nurses and other specialized instructional personnel you should look for opportunities to assist in the creation of such content. In the meantime, please choose learning opportunities currently existing from national groups agencies, and organizations that are listed in the weekly *SN Bulletin* sent to all in School Nursing across Vermont.

Will there be some clear guidelines for returning to school to share with administration when we meet? It would be helpful to have clear information to help facilitate the return to school

We will use the experience and guidance from re-opening childcare, the Governor's team including AOE and the national guidance from AAP, NASN, CDC as they become available.

Child Care: Opening for more children

Do you recommend sending children to childcare at this point in time...or should we keep them home?

This is a personal choice made with consideration of your personal situation, your child's health status and developmental needs. We are confident that Vermont childcare environments are using safe practices. However, there is small risk to all of our decisions about relaxing our distancing in the weeks and months ahead. Child care is available for essential workers, see the [guidance here](#) (pg. 2) which includes education personnel. Stay tuned for more guidance for childcare openings.

COVID-19 Disease Presentation and Transmission

Can you talk more about asymptomatic transmission please? How do you feel about folks feeling like they may have been in contact with this virus back in January?

We are trying to learn more about possible cases of COVID-19 before the first recognized cases in late February in U.S. but to date, this is just a hypothesis. Stay tuned.

Asymptomatic transmission is not well understood to date but in some cases has been discovered through the contact tracing process which asks a person with COVID-19 who they were around in the days prior to symptom onset. We will keep you posted as more information is known from other states and countries' experience.

Health Screenings for Influenza Like Illnesses, e.g. COVID-19 and Supplies

Please note that it is not yet known if we will do daily health screening for all children entering school or ask families to do so. More to come on this.

What is included in the health screen families may do at home or that we will do prior to a student entering school?

[Health Guidance for Emergency Programs Providing Childcare for Essential Persons](#) is a guide that will be updated for schools.

Part time school nurses will need to work with school administrators to train school personnel to do a daily screening if the plan is for the health screening to occur at school. Currently this is being done by childcare providers providing care for essential workers.

Will schools be allowing college students into schools for their educational purposes? Should we be taking temps of the adults as well as the students at drop off?

All adults and visitors should follow the guidance outlined in [the VOSHA training](#) and practice every day preventive measures. Visitors from out-of-state currently are asked to follow the [guidance for 14 day quarantine](#) prior to engaging with Vermonters.

How will families get access to thermometers?

In general, families will need to purchase their own thermometers but as always, we should work closely together for families that are unable to access or purchase a thermometer.

How can we be certain at-home screenings are accurate? Right now we have stay at home if you are sick procedures. Many parents need to work, especially after this closure. They give kids Tylenol and send them anyway.

Building trust with families is a daily process of listening and education. In this extraordinary time, we are relying on our communities and citizens to pull together to prevent the spread of COVID-19. School personnel will need to follow protocols for exclusion closely. Current exclusion protocols can be found here: [Health Guidance for Childcare and Schools Providing Childcare for Essential Persons \(Revised April 5, 2020\)](#)

Immunizations

Will the state reconsider the influenza vaccination as highly recommended to mandatory?

Interesting question. We will certainly use every opportunity to promote immunizations in the coming months! The state will continue to focus on [every day preventive measures to prevent infectious respiratory infections, and to recommend the influenza vaccine for all eligible individuals.](#)

Face Coverings and Supplies for School Personnel

Could you recommend what type of “face coverings” would offer the best protection; Should the cloth masks include filters?

Please see: [Using Cloth Face Coverings to Help Slow the Spread of COVID-19](#)

Who will buy face coverings and gloves for school personnel?

Schools, with support from state officials managing supplies will supply cloth facial coverings and gloves for staff.

Kids and Face Coverings

Masks for the teachers, full time, and the students full time? Why would we put masks on kids? And wear the masks during PE/ recess?

Children and cloth facial coverings is an ongoing area of exploration and debate in this journey. Children are adaptable and willing to try new things. If all of the adults around them are wearing masks, including their parents, I believe most children will want one too. On the other hand, children with asthma or other breathing disruptions, or children with certain developmental concerns including sensory issues may not tolerate cloth facial coverings. PE/Recess will follow the same general guidance with adaptations as described.

This is the current guidance for children over age 2. [Using Cloth Face Coverings to Help Slow the Spread of COVID-19.](#)

School nursing resources, e.g. space, PPE for health care procedures

PPE is for SNs or personnel performing high aerosol procedures, e.g. nebulizers, suctioning, physical assessment of an ill individual who is actively coughing and sneezing.

PPE for aerosolizing health care activities or for ill individuals who require close personal contact to provide care or assessment, e.g. young children or students with developmental disabilities, should include N-95 respirators, face shields – eye protection, gowns, gloves.

Otherwise surgical masks, gloves to protect the school nurse during frequent interactions with otherwise healthy individuals, e.g., injuries, medication administration, will need to be ordered.

How will we provide an isolation space when one does not currently exist? Can a curtain be used as a barrier to isolate a sick student while waiting to be picked up?

Schools will want to be creative as they plan for spaces that allow for daily health screenings (should it be recommended) and for isolation of sick students to be transported home. Barriers that allow for visual inspection during screening or supervision while in isolation may include plastic or plexiglass screens while protecting against respiratory droplet exposure.

Students with special health/underlying health conditions and wellness needs

For our medically vulnerable students, should we be asking for a healthcare provider signed clearance form to attend school in the fall?

Yes, all decisions about alternative learning environments for children with special health needs should be made with medical home, school nurse and other school personnel involved in special education process. If the medical home has not already made recommendations to the family about when their child should return to school, it may be appropriate to ask them to consult with that medical home.

Stay tuned for information in the unknown future and start thinking creatively about every day preventive measures for those with underlying health conditions.

If a student used lip reading how can an adult wear a mask?

We just heard that there is a company making masks with clear windows over the lips. It is called The Communicator: <https://safenclear.com/product/communicator-box/>. We should think together about how to get orders distributed for children who read lips.

Sick kids

What about children who are actively coughing? Should we be masking children with new coughs who do not have fevers?

Students and other individuals who are actively coughing with new coughs need to be home. Those who are actively coughing need to wear a facial covering, isolate, and be dismissed to parent/guardian.

Students with well controlled asthma or cystic fibrosis when they have new symptoms of coughing or of illness for example, should be sent home, wearing a facial covering if tolerated.

Summer Camps: Day and Overnight

Are sleep away camps still able to run at this point?

This question is still under discussion.

Antibody Testing or Serology Studies

Is there any information regarding COVID antibody testing?

Serology testing is not reliable or accurate yet to recommend for testing of individuals in Vermont at this time. The Serology testing work group is meeting again on May 15th to look at evolution of the available test and their accuracy. Stay tuned. See [FAQ – VDH website on Serologic \(antibody\) testing](#).

Clinical Picture

What about foot lesions, are they now being seen as COVID-19 symptoms in children?

Scattered reports of “COVID toes” around the world but non confirmed in Vermont. Our infectious disease physicians are keeping track of the literature. Since there is a major inflammatory response to the virus, it makes sense that areas of small blood vessels like toes may be impacted.

Contact Tracing

VDH has a large team of contact tracers to meet the current and future needs of our response. If this changes, we will explore workforce expansion in this area including nurses if available.

Essential School Health Services

Consider the [Essential School Health Services Model](#) as a means for highlighting SN leadership to support school administration and the development of a COVID-19 re-entry plan.

SN Office Hours and Confidentiality

Student and personnel confidentiality is always important. Please follow school and Agency of Education policy and guidance. [Student Privacy During COVID-19](#) (VT AOE)

What's to come...

- Vermont is still working to minimizing disease transmission. We will be looking toward greater control of COVID-19 and safe disease management.
- We can't predict what the near future will hold, but we will continue to assess summer and fall activities and will communicate updates and changes as the situation evolves.
- What gradual reopening will look like is not yet fully clear, but it will likely mean that summer/fall group activities may not look like they did before.
- Vermont put many steps in place as we began our COVID-19 response in early February 2020.
- We will be able to relax some of those strategies in the days and weeks ahead. Many strategies will likely remain in place, including:
 - Cloth masks in public
 - Outdoor events (where possible) may generally be preferred over indoor events
 - The size of group gatherings will continue to be restricted
 - Partial occupancy may be required for events/programs to allow for social distancing
 - Stay home when sick policies will be strongly recommended
 - Temperature checks are not sensitive for identifying all cases and we don't know yet whether they will be recommended

Support for School Nurses

How will facility needs be met such as space, building isolation, access to running water?

- Build relationships with your families, teachers, and school community to advocate with champions and key decision makers.
- Engage with school nursing professional organization and VDH
- Stay current on COVID-19 recovery planning coming from CDC, federal and state agencies.

Contact

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