DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Respiratory Illness and Gastrointestinal Illness (GI) Outbreak Reporting

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Is this reporting required?

Schools are required to report certain illnesses, like COVID-19, influenza, some GI illnesses, under Minnesota disease reporting rules:

- Reporting of COVID-19/SARS-CoV-2 under the Minnesota Communicable Disease Rules, Chapter 4605.7080 (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/reportable/rule/process/index.html)
- Infectious Disease Reporting (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/reportable)
- School Health Personnel Immunization and Disease Reporting (www.health.state.mn.us/people/immunize/ed/school.html)

Do I report single cases of other reportable diseases (e.g., measles, pertussis, chickenpox) with this survey?

No. Please continue to report single cases of other reportable diseases, (e.g., measles, pertussis, chickenpox) through your normal process. More information on reportable diseases and how to report can be found at School Health Personnel Immunization and Disease Reporting (www.health.state.mn.us/people/immunize/ed/school.html).

Do private schools need to do this reporting?

Yes. Public, private, and charter schools should report.

How do I prevent outbreaks of respiratory and GI illness before they occur?

Follow the prevention guidelines found on CDC: Operational Guidance for K-12 Schools and Early Care and Education Programs to Support Safe In-Person Learning (www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-childcare-guidance.html) and Outbreaks at Schools, Child Care, and Long-term Care Facilities (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/foodborne/outbreak/facility) (GI illness).

Do we still use the influenza like illness (ILI) reporting threshold (e.g., 3 per classroom at the elementary level)?

No. This new respiratory reporting system is taking the place of both ILI and COVID-19 reporting. When 10% of your student enrollment is absent with symptoms of respiratory illness and/or a diagnosis of a respiratory illness on a given day, complete this REDCap form: Respiratory Illness and Gastrointestinal Illness Outbreak Reporting (https://redcap.health.state.mn.us/redcap/surveys/?s=MJEJYFFCKNLD4N4C). This threshold applies to all school levels. **There is no longer a separate threshold for elementary schools**.

How often do we report?

- For respiratory illness, submit one report when you reach the 10% student threshold. You do not need to submit a new report for at least two weeks (14 days) after the initial report.

- For GI illness, submit one report each time the GI illness exceeds your established baseline.

How is this different from the GI reporting that we have been doing?

The type of GI illness information you will report is the same as what you have been reporting. The only difference is the method in which you report. Rather than using multiple reporting methods for different illnesses, school health reporters can report different illness outbreaks using one single form.

Does a school nurse have to complete the form, or can another school staff member do it? What if we don't have a school nurse?

MDH does not require a specific person to complete the report. However, your school may have a particular policy about who is responsible for reporting.

What if I don't have a diagnosis, only symptoms?

The reporting threshold is based on symptoms, not a specific diagnosis. If you have a diagnosis, please include it in your submission, but it is not required.

What if I don't know the number of staff at the school?

You can enter an estimate for the number of staff.

What if we do not collect staff illness information?

The threshold is set up so that it is dependent on student illness. If staff illness is known, we ask for that information to be included when you report for student illness, but we recognize that schools may not always know why staff are out on a given day.

Who do we contact if we have questions?

- For respiratory illness questions email health.schools.covid19@state.mn.us or health.vpd.report@state.mn.us.

- For GI questions contact health.foodill@state.mn.us or 1-877-FOOD-ILL (877-366-3455).

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To obtain this information in a different format, call: 651-201-5414.