Sample: Frequently Asked Questions for Families – Respiratory illness including COVID-19

**How will parents and families be informed about respiratory disease outbreaks at school?**  
In \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_district, we will use \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ [Insert local methods used (e.g., phone calls, texts, web notification)] method to communicate information. Parents and families will be informed about [periods of high COVID-19 transmission/ potential exposure to communicable disease], and may be asked to maximize [layered mitigation](https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/healthsafety/Documents/ODE_LayeredHealthSafetyMeasures_Filters.pdf?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery) strategies, including wearing face coverings.

**How else will the district communicate the latest information about COVID-19?**In emergency situations, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ District relies on three methods of communication:

1. [customize with local details] Messenger service / push notifications (automatic messages delivered instantly to your mobile device)
2. Website homepage for alerts and notifications
3. Social Media

**What defines high levels of COVID-19 transmission at my child’s school?**

Schools and our Local Public Health Authority (LPHA) have partnered to provide support for respiratory disease outbreaks long before the COVID-19 pandemic. At this stage of the pandemic, we are returning to pre-pandemic protocols for respiratory disease outbreak management. Our schools will monitor unusual absenteeism or illness within a cohort and notify the LPHA about unusual respiratory disease activity if the following thresholds are met.

* 1. At the school level: ≥ 30% absenteeism, with at least 10 students/staff absent.
  2. At the cohort level: ≥ 20% absenteeism, with at least 3 students/staff absent.

When a threshold is met, LPHA partners will begin an outbreak investigation based on these respiratory disease thresholds and report the outbreak to the Oregon Health Authority. Some public health recommendations may include universal use of face coverings while an outbreak is active, utilizing the enhanced testing program within cohorts, or other infection prevention and control measures.

**Why won’t the school share information about the student who is ill with a communicable disease?**

We value protecting the identities of individuals and are required to protect student privacy under the federal FERPA law. Schools are discouraged from providing any personally identifiable information and should consider the cohort size when notifying a small group of direct exposure.

Note: Schools are responsible for protecting privacy and should consult with legal counsel, or review [FERPA requirements](https://ecfr.io/Title-34/Part-99) in light of their own tools for communication. \*Schools continue to be able to share students/staff specific information with the LPHA as needed for case investigation.

**Will I know whether there was a sick person in my child’s classroom?**  
No, the school will not inform families when an individual in your student’s classroom is ill. Staff and students who are in a cohort that includes individuals at higher risk of severe illness will be offered enhanced exposure testing when a COVID-19 case is known to have been present in their cohort. Enhanced exposure testing is offered to individuals or to cohorts that include individuals at increased risk of severe disease. Protecting the identities of individuals is important. In some schools and locations, disclosing health information could lead to identification of individuals who test positive or may be ill. Sharing the identity is an unauthorized disclosure of personal health information and could result in stigmatization of these individuals and their families.

**Why isn’t school closing?**Our school has taken the following steps to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

* [Insert local details]

**What is an epilink?**  
An epilink, or epidemiological link, is a particular place or individual that people who are ill have in common, such as a workplace, co-worker or family member. It serves as a link or connection between people who are confirmed to have a communicable disease.