



# Colchester School District

Administrative Offices, 125 Laker Lane, PO Box 27, Colchester, Vermont 05446

Phone: (802) 264-5999 • [www.csdvt.org](http://www.csdvt.org) • Fax: (802) 863-4774

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CSD Community,

The State of Vermont is making widespread changes to how they approach COVID-19. Doctors, scientists, and experts all agree that the new variant spreads far more easily and quickly, making the current method of contact tracing and quarantine obsolete. We are still waiting for written guidance and resources from the Agency of Education (AOE) and Vermont Department of Health (VDH), however, at yesterday's press conference they did preview the changes for schools which include:

- Replacing individualized contact tracing with broader exposure notifications.
- Shifting away from PCR testing, which takes too long to get results given how quickly the virus spreads, in favor of rapid antigen tests.
- Education Secretary Dan French also made it clear that schools cannot shift to remote learning for a period of time; they are either considered open or closed.

## **What's Next?**

Families and staff can expect that we will continue to provide individualized contact tracing through the end of the week. We do not plan on making any significant shifts until we have received the guidance in writing and our COVID Response Team has gone through it to identify how we will implement it in our district.

That being said, our systems are currently strained by the number of cases we are processing each day. We are working around the clock to ensure timely notification to close contacts but our current system that includes making personal phone calls and individualized notifications has become unsustainable. For context, we processed 46 cases during the entire month of December. As of yesterday, less than two weeks into January, we have already processed 67 cases with over a dozen more in progress right now for today. (Weekly and total district case counts are available at [www.csdvt.org/covidcases](http://www.csdvt.org/covidcases).)

With that in mind, please know that we may not be able to make personal/individual notifications by phone anymore. We'll continue to make our best effort to make calls, but it may not always be possible. Families of close contacts will still receive an email with all the information and links outlining the exposure and what to do. Those who have signed up for text will also get a text alert. (*To sign up to receive text messages, text "y" to 67587.*) It would help us tremendously if families could make a point to check their email each day.

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**Amy Minor**  
Superintendent  
of Schools

**George Trieb**  
Business & Operations  
Manager

**Carrie Lutz**  
Director of Student  
Support Services

**Gwendolyn Carmolli**  
Director of Curriculum  
& Instruction

### **Changes from VDH Regarding Booster Shots**

Additionally, we wanted to highlight one more important change that affects students between ages 12 and 17. Previously, we had been told multiple times by the VDH that if a student were more than 6 months past their initial 2-dose vaccine series, they would have to follow quarantine guidance unless they had a booster shot. Over the weekend, the VDH changed its guidance. While they still highly recommend it - they're seeing much less transmission and severe symptoms with those who have a booster shot - it is not required for those between the ages of 12 and 17. If your student is under 18 and vaccinated with their initial 2-dose series, they do not need to quarantine if they're exposed. [See their full guidance here.](#)

### **A Final Plea**

We say it hundreds of times a day, but it's still happening. **PLEASE STAY HOME IF YOU HAVE SYMPTOMS**. We are continuing to send students home who are sick who then go on to test positive. You can play an active role in keeping our doors open. Please stay home if you are sick. Thank you for doing your part.

Be well,

Amy Minor  
Superintendent of Schools