

COVID-19 SURVEILLANCE IN THE SCHOOLS OF PUNJAB

Schools have a positive impact not only on education but also on health and development. Re-opening of schools after the second wave of SARS-CoV-2 will allow students to complete their studies, have access to nutrition services (mid-day meal), and opportunity for enjoying social relationships with their peers.

Following measures should be put in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in schools and into the community.

- a) Schools must educate teachers, staff and students on COVID-19 prevention measures, develop a schedule for daily cleaning and disinfection of the school environment, facilities and frequently touched surfaces, and ensure availability of hand hygiene facilities and masks.
- b) Schools should enforce the policy of "staying home if unwell"; ensure students or staff who have been in contact with a COVID-19 case to stay home for 14 days.
- c) Schools should keep students and parents informed about the measures being implemented specially about the importance of covid-19 vaccination to ensure their collaboration and support.
- d) Consider the age and capacity of students to understand and respect the prevention and control measures put in place; younger children may find it more difficult to adhere to physical distancing or the appropriate use of masks. However physical distancing of at least 6 feet between individuals can be maintained by spacing of desks, staging recesses, breaks and lunch breaks; limiting the mixing of classes and of age groups; considering smaller classes or alternating attendance schedules, and ensuring good ventilation in classrooms, frequent hand and respiratory hygiene, and environmental cleaning measures should be in place to limit exposure.

SARS-CoV-2 Surveillance Protocol

1. Students and staff should be screened by non-contact thermometers at entry and exit points.
2. Syndromic surveillance must be carried out for Influenza like illness to detect suspected COVID-19 cases.
3. Suspected cases should be sent home and tested for COVID-19. They should not be allowed to come to the school until tested negative or symptoms get resolved. If tested positive, he/she should be isolated and treated as per COVID-19 treatment protocol. Contact tracing and their testing should be conducted as per the COVID-19 protocols.
4. Absent students must be contacted by the class teacher for enquiring about the symptoms of Influenza like illness. If the number of students with influenza like illness who are absent

or sent home reaches 5% of the total school attendance on a given day, local health authorities must be alerted for suspected outbreak.

OR

If from same class, three or more students with influenza like illness are absent or sent home on a given day, local health authorities must be alerted for suspected outbreak.

5. Class must be suspended and quarantined for 14 days if one COVID-19 case is confirmed and school must be suspended for 14 days if two or more than two COVID-19 cases are detected. If one-third of the schools in a city or town or block are closed then all schools in that geography must be closed.
6. The probability that the single case or more than one case becomes an outbreak depend upon how strictly the school follows mitigation/preventive measures.
7. A nodal officer must be appointed in the school who will compile the screening data of whole school like the number of suspected cases detected, number of suspected cases tested, number of suspected cases tested positive etc. He/she will share a daily report with the district administration.
8. *Testing Strategy:* The first priority of testing strategy is to ensure that access to Rapid Antigen Testing & RTPCR Testing should be available for any student or school staff showing symptoms of COVID-19. Since, taking nasopharyngeal sample from the children need special skills, school administration must identify the local testing centers for testing children & staff.
9. Along with the preventive and control measures, COVID-19 testing with quick turnaround time is also important for reducing the COVID-19 transmission in the schools. Suspected cases detected by routine surveillance and screening by rapid antigen testing must be confirmed by RT-PCR testing.

Table below presents testing strategy in the schools based on the COVID-19 risk assessment.

7-day positivity rate	COVID-19 Risk Level	Goals of Testing	Testing Strategy
<1%	Very Low	Identify or rule out COVID-19 infection in students and staff with Covid-19- like symptoms or recent history of contact with a confirmed case using diagnosing test (RT-PCR)	Continued mitigation measures in school. Students and staff are offered diagnostic testing as needed. If a confirmed positive case is found, all individuals in classroom and any other close contacts are quarantined and tested

1-5%	Low	Monitor for an increase in infection rates using surveillance testing (Pooled testing). Monitor individuals at higher risk of transmitting the virus using routine screening. Continue to offer accessible and actionable diagnostic testing	Routine surveillance testing every week in the school. If a pool is found positive, all individuals in the pool remain in quarantine until individual testing identifies who is infected. Routine screening for staff in close contact with a significant number of other people throughout the day. Students and staff are offered diagnostic testing as needed. If a confirmed positive case is found, all individuals in the affected classroom and any other close contacts are quarantined and tested.
6-10%	Moderate	Reduce the probability of transmission within the school using routine screening by Rapid antigen test. Continue to offer accessible and actionable diagnostic testing.	A routine screening program that carefully balances test frequency, accuracy, and time to results is implemented for all students and staff to significantly reduce infection transmission. Students and staff are offered diagnostic testing as needed. If a confirmed positive case is found, all individuals in that classroom are quarantined and tested.
>10%	High	Monitor for an increase in infection rate if teachers and staff are on-site using surveillance testing. Continue to offer accessible and actionable diagnostic testing.	No in-person learning for students. Staff come to school for remote teaching, using strict mitigation measures, and testing every two weeks. Staff at high risk of severe illness work off-site. Students and staff are offered diagnostic testing as needed.

2020: 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10. 11. 12. 13. 14. 15. 16. 17. 18. 19. 20. 21. 22. 23. 24. 25. 26. 27. 28. 29. 30. 31. 32. 33. 34. 35. 36. 37. 38. 39. 40. 41. 42. 43. 44. 45. 46. 47. 48. 49. 50. 51. 52. 53. 54. 55. 56. 57. 58. 59. 60. 61. 62. 63. 64. 65. 66. 67. 68. 69. 70. 71. 72. 73. 74. 75. 76. 77. 78. 79. 80. 81. 82. 83. 84. 85. 86. 87. 88. 89. 90. 91. 92. 93. 94. 95. 96. 97. 98. 99. 100.

2021: 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10. 11. 12. 13. 14. 15. 16. 17. 18. 19. 20. 21. 22. 23. 24. 25. 26. 27. 28. 29. 30. 31. 32. 33. 34. 35. 36. 37. 38. 39. 40. 41. 42. 43. 44. 45. 46. 47. 48. 49. 50. 51. 52. 53. 54. 55. 56. 57. 58. 59. 60. 61. 62. 63. 64. 65. 66. 67. 68. 69. 70. 71. 72. 73. 74. 75. 76. 77. 78. 79. 80. 81. 82. 83. 84. 85. 86. 87. 88. 89. 90. 91. 92. 93. 94. 95. 96. 97. 98. 99. 100.

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