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KAITLAN BASTON, MD, MSc, DFASAM
Commissioner

EXECUTIVE DIRECTIVE NO. 21-011 (4th Revision)

Protocols for COVID-19 Reporting for School Settings

WHEREAS, on March 9, 2020, Governor Murphy issued Executive Order No. 103, declaring the existence of a Public Health Emergency, pursuant to the Emergency Health Powers Act, N.J.S.A 26:13-1 et seq., and a State of Emergency, pursuant to the Disaster Control Act, N.J.S.A. App. A:9-33 et seq., throughout the State due to the public health hazard created by Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19); and

WHEREAS, the Public Health Emergency was extended multiple times by Governor Murphy pursuant to various Executive Orders; and

WHEREAS, on June 4, 2021, Governor Murphy signed P.L.2021, c.103 and issued Executive Order No. 244, which among other things, terminated the Public Health Emergency, declared in Executive Order No. 103, but continued the State of Emergency; and

WHEREAS, P.L.2021, c.103 continued certain orders and directives, and authorized the Commissioner of Health to issue orders, directives, and waivers related to: (1) vaccination distribution, administration, and management; (2) COVID-19 testing; (3) health resources and personnel allocation; (4) data collection, retention, sharing, and access; (5) coordination of local health departments; and (6) implementation of any applicable recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to prevent or limit the transmission of COVID-19, including in specific settings; and

WHEREAS, the CDC has emphasized that vaccination is a critical means to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and to avoid infection of those individuals who cannot be vaccinated because their age or medical conditions preclude them from receiving one; and

WHEREAS, on August 23, 2021, Governor Murphy issued Executive Order No. 253, setting forth mandatory requirements related to vaccination and testing for certain school settings; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Executive Order No. 253, all public, private, and parochial preschool programs, and elementary and secondary schools, including charter and renaissance schools were required to maintain a policy that required covered workers to either provide adequate proof that they have been fully vaccinated or submit to COVID-

19 testing at minimum one to two times weekly; and

WHEREAS, on September 20, 2021, Governor Murphy issued Executive Order No. 264, setting forth mandatory requirements related to vaccination and testing for certain child care settings; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Executive Order No. 264, covered workers in covered child care centers and other child care facilities were required to be fully vaccinated or submit to COVID-19 testing at minimum one to two times weekly; and

WHEREAS, on January 11, 2022, Governor Murphy issued Executive Order No. 280, declaring the existence of a new Public Health Emergency, pursuant to the Emergency Health Powers Act, N.J.S.A. 26:13-1 et seq., in the State of New Jersey due to the surge of cases and hospitalizations tied to the new variants of COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, on March 4, 2022, Governor Murphy issued Executive Order No. 292 lifting the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency but maintaining the requirements in Executive Order Nos. 253 and 264 under the State of Emergency declared pursuant to the Disaster Control Act; and

WHEREAS, on August 11, 2022, the CDC issued updated “Guidance for Minimizing the Impact of COVID-19 on Individual Persons, Communities, and Health Care Systems” in which the CDC recognizes that high levels of vaccine and infection-induced immunity and the availability of effective treatments and prevention tools have substantially reduced the risk for medically significant COVID-19 illness, and associated hospitalization and death; and

WHEREAS, on August 11, 2022, the CDC also issued updated “Operational Guidance for K-12 Schools and Early Care and Education Programs to Support Safe In-Person Learning” in which the CDC recommends that school districts and child care settings utilize COVID-19 mitigation protocols on a flexible basis; and

WHEREAS, as reported in the updated guidance for school districts and child care settings, the CDC is no longer recommending routine screening testing in school districts and child care settings, with limited exceptions; and

WHEREAS, in light of the CDC’s updated guidance, and given the progress the State made combating COVID-19, the Governor issued Executive Order No. 302 (2022) on August 15, 2022, which began to responsibly lift certain mitigation protocols in place, including the requirement that school districts and child care settings maintain a policy requiring their unvaccinated covered workers to submit to weekly or twice weekly COVID-19 testing, as the State continued to the next phase of the COVID-19 response; and

WHEREAS, while Executive Order No. 302 lifted the vaccination and testing requirements for school districts, the Executive Order maintains the requirement for

school districts to continue to report information to the Department of Health using the Department's Surveillance for Influenza and COVID-19 (SIC) module because surveillance of school-associated COVID-19 cases, clusters, and outbreaks remained necessary for DOH to understand and track COVID-19 in the school setting, including monitoring the impact of vaccination, in order to inform public health decisions and actions; and

WHEREAS, on May 17, 2024, CDC released consolidated, evidence-based guidance for preventing the spread of infections in K-12 schools. In this guidance, the CDC advises schools to develop systems to track illness-related absenteeism and monitor for trends to prevent the spread of disease among students and staff members; and

WHEREAS, with the recent CDC guidance, it remains critically important for school settings to continue to report COVID-19 information into DOH's SIC module, as required by Executive Order 302, so that DOH may continue to monitor and understand the presence of COVID-19 in school settings; and

WHEREAS, for DOH to continue to receive COVID-19 information from school settings for the 2024-2025 school year, revisions to the Executive Directive are warranted.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Kaitlan Baston, Commissioner of the Department of Health, hereby order and directs the following:

1. Consistent with Executive Order 302 (2022), the following definitions apply for the purposes of this Directive and the SIC Module Reporting requirements:
 - a. "School settings" means any public, private, and parochial preschool programs, and elementary and secondary schools, including charter and renaissance schools.
2. Each school setting shall complete the Surveillance for Infectious Conditions, formerly known as the Surveillance for Influenza and COVID-19 (SIC) Module in the Communicable Disease Reporting and Surveillance System (CDRSS), which is available at: <https://cdrs.doh.state.nj.us/>; under the Training tab, entitled "Training and Access for K-12 SIC Module for School Users" and by emailing CDS.COVRPT@doh.nj.gov for initial access.
3. As part of the SIC Module, each school building in the school setting shall submit the information outlined in the "Surveillance for Infectious Conditions (SIC) Module for Schools User Guide" (available at: <https://cdrs.doh.state.nj.us/>, under the [Help Documents and User Guides tab](#)) in a prescribed format through the designated portal.
4. School settings shall be required to submit the SIC Module report on a weekly

basis for the 2024-2025 academic year, beginning the week of September 16, 2024, by 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday of each week until the end of the school year.

5. School settings not submitting into the SIC Module on a weekly basis shall be considered delinquent. Delinquencies may be referred to the Department of Education or the Department of Law and Public Safety, or both, as appropriate, based on the length of time delinquent, number of times delinquent, and efforts made toward compliance. The local health department may also be notified of the delinquency.

This 4th Revised Executive Directive supersedes Revised Executive Directive 21-011 issued on April 6, 2022, Executive Directive 21-011 issued on September 2, 2022 and Executive Directive 21-011 issued on September 6, 2023.

This Order shall take effect immediately. The provisions of this Directive shall remain in force and effect in accordance with Executive Order No. 302 (2022), until otherwise modified, supplemented, and/or rescinded or until the State of Emergency is no longer in effect, whichever is sooner.



Kaitlan Baston, MD, MSc, DFASAM
Commissioner

Date 8/21/24