Charlene Russell Tucker – Commissioner of Education
John Khalil – Staff Attorney with SDE
John Frassinelli – Division Director, SDE
Tom St. Louis – Epidemiologist with DPH
Lynn Sosa – Deputy State Epidemiologist
Kristin Gerard – DPH Epidemiologist,
Matt Cartter – State Epidemiologist CT DPH
Irene Parisi – Chief Academic Officer for SDE

Charlene Russell Tucker: Welcome and introductions
Please see Addendum 7 attached. It has been sent to Superintendents.

Tom St. Louis: The new Addendum 7 is out. I know a lot of you have been waiting for it. Please take some time to read through it. It has been reorganized to be more like the other guidance we have. In the spirit of other guidance, it is less prescriptive.

**Please thoughtfully read the whole document before emailing me questions.**

Vaccination is plan A in terms of safety for practices and performances in the performing arts.

As you know, there is currently an order requiring masking in schools. We have included a consideration that schools might make limited exceptions to continuous mask wearing in the context of dramatic and performing arts.

Tom reviews some of the highpoints about mitigation considerations.

Irene Parisi: Thank you, Tom. This is for all Arts programming. This applies to Dance and Theater, too. I want to call attention to pages 6 and 7 to bring attention to the arts. We support the importance of arts experience and education. We want students to be returning to a rich experience of expression and self-exploration through the arts.

A little technical trouble as Charlene and John are muted. It seems that perhaps Michelle is muted, too.

TSL: Can people hear me? [Tom starts freestyling.]

Question: Something about flag football outside and extracurricular activity.

TSL: One activity is physical education, an academic requirement, whereas another activity which is not a requirement may have different guidance.

Is anyone back?

CRT: Can you hear me?

TSL: Hooray! [Wiping a bead of sweat.]

Lynn Sosa: Can you hear me now?

CDC updated guidance for fully vaccinated persons. If exposed and asymptomatic, they should be tested at 5-7 days instead of 3-5 days.
They’ve also provided clarification about the definition of fully vaccinated. This is still based on the primary series. It does not include booster doses. It mentions WHO-approved vaccines and people who may have gotten mix and match vaccines [a dose each of two separate vaccines].

CRT: Appreciation to Irene and her work with our Arts educators with a shoutout to the importance of Arts education.

CRT: Dr. Cartter?

Matt Cartter: Yesterday CDC had its usual Monday afternoon call. The lead announcement yesterday was about an FAQ for school administrators.

For the first time they have addressed the “test to stay” option. CDC remarks that it is a “promising practice” and that they are reviewing all the data to evaluate its effectiveness. They hope to complete their review by December.

There is a national shortage of rapid antigen test kits. This exists for several reasons. Test to stay relies on widespread availability of rapid antigen test kits.

We share your eagerness about minimizing the burden of quarantine on students.

Q: A parent asked about her child with high antibodies. Why do they have to be out?

LS: CDC recently updated their guidance about antibody testing. They do not support using antibody testing for making decisions for or against quarantine.

MC: The antibodies that a test measures are not necessarily the antibodies that are protective. It tells you that you’ve been exposed and infected in the past. It does not meaningfully predict immunity, especially to the currently circulating types.

LS: In addition, these tests are not standardized or testing for exactly the same antibodies.

Please also see links to CDC updates below.


CDC FAQ for School Administrators: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/admin-faq.html#print

Q: We’re getting complaints that physicians are bringing in notes saying the student has an “alternate diagnosis”, but not designating that diagnosis.

Also, parents with students that symptomatic get an antigen that is positive, then a PCR is sent which comes back negative.

LS: To the first one, we’ve heard this before. I’ve discussed it with John Khalil. I don’t understand why they won’t provide the diagnosis. The parent can insist on an alternate diagnosis. I don’t know what else to say. HIPAA doesn’t apply.

As to the second, in our Healthcare Provider Updates, we have addressed antigen test interpretation, especially in the context of symptoms. For someone that has symptoms and a positive antigen, the algorithm stops. That is a positive.

John Frassinelli: Does the 3-foot distance apply for performing arts classes.

TSL: It depends on the class. All seated and learning vs moving around or playing wind instruments? Not all classroom settings are the same. You need to think about the specifics of the situation.

Q: What about return to school with symptoms and a negative test but recommendation to get another test in a few days?
LS: See Addendum 5. If a negative test and symptoms resolving, OK to be at school.

Q: Are there different rules for international travel?

LS: Yes. It hasn't changed. See the CDC guidance.

TSL: We are in conversation with CIAC about winter sports guidance. We expect to have something well before the start of seasons.

Q: Any change to the recommendations about home testing?

LS: There is no change.

TSL: There is a question about masking exceptions for performing arts and role of local school board. That is not what Addendum 7 says. Please read the document. There is an option for limited exceptions in special circumstances when it is appropriate and necessary.

Q: We’re starting to think about childhood vaccination eligibility, lowering rates, and colder weather. We may then have concerns about air quality.

TSL: First of all, I recommend talking to your HVAC consultant. If you have unit ventilators that can bring in fresh air, they will displace air that is in the room. In situations with less-than-ideal ventilation, you could add HEPA filtration units, but discuss this with your HVAC consultant, too. Consider size, location in the room, person capacity. You don’t want an ionizing unit that can create ozone which isn’t healthy to breathe.

LS: I know there are lots of questions about antigen tests. I’ve asked Michelle to circulate the CDC guidance about interpretation and use of antigen tests. To reiterate, symptoms plus positive antigen test equals positive.


Remember that there may be different considerations for a clinician making clinical decisions based on local disease activity.

JF: FDA meets 10/26/21. CDC meets 11/2,3. We expect 5-11 vaccine clearance at that time. We plan to have someone from the vaccine team on next week.

Q: I have a question about testing for a fully vaccinated person. Effective immediately?

LS: Yes. Day 5-7 testing is effective immediately.

Q: What about an individual that tested positive in early September and is now symptomatic again?

LS: The guidance says those situations need to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. A second infection would be unlikely unless immunocompromised. [Note an antigen test is useful in this context.]

Q: Is testing recommended or required?

LS: After an exposure, they need to mask for 14 days. A test at day 5-7 is recommended, not required.

Q: Spacing flu and COVID vaccination?

LS: No worries. One in each arm, per Fauci. Please read the CDC clinical considerations for COVID vaccine document.

Q: Any trends on positives in people vaccinated?
LS: See the Thursday updates which include a ton of data. No trends on rates of infection, hospitalization and death among unvaccinated. The relative risk for being unvaccinated has not changed.

CRT: Any updates on the state of the state?

MC: I just checked the NYT COVID tracker. CT no longer has the lowest rate in the US. As the weather gets colder and people move indoors, we can expect more cases. There is a surge in cases among northern tier states. More indoor activity increases risk of transmission.

CRT: Thank you everyone. Please keep the questions coming. Thank you, too, for the appreciations, you have shared.

See you next week. Stay well and stay safe.

**Audience Question**
Q: If a person is fully vaccinated and was in contact with a positive case and they have no symptoms but decide to get a Covid test in 3-5 days do they have to stay home after they get the test and wait for the results?
A: No they do not. I will be addressing this shortly as there has been an update to the CDC guidance on the timing of testing.

**Audience Question**
Q: Is the change in timing for the testing still a recommendation versus a requirement for the fully vaccinated and then exposed?
A: Yes still a recommendation.

**Audience Question**
Q: In light of this update, will Addendum 5 be updated?
A: Yes.

**Audience Question**
Q: Wanting to know about "testing out of a positive". If we have a student who tested positive with a PCR test, parents are asking how they can test out of that - aka, 2 neg PCR tests, etc. Can we get guidelines on this?
A: If a person has tested positive, it is no longer recommended to use two PCR tests to shorten the isolation period except in very specific situations (eg. asymptomatic healthcare personnel).

**Audience Question**
Q: confirming that fully vaccinated students that are exposed are still advised to remain masked, even outdoors and during sports, until they test negative 5-7 days after last exposure?
A: According to CDC guidance, this applies to indoor settings only. Fully vaccinated individuals without symptoms who are a close contact do not need to mask outdoors during activities.

**Audience Question**
Q: Is there a link for CDC update on fully vax exposed people testing 5-7 days?
A: Yes it will be posted in the chat; its the Interim Guidance for Fully Vaccinated Persons.

**Audience Question**
Q: We continue to get the repeated question: Is the CSDE/DPH "allowing" concerts? Our response has been that we are following state and local guidelines for gatherings. For example, if gatherings are allowed, concerts can go forward. Is this accurate?
A: Yes. There are no restrictions statewide, but certainly if there are local restrictions then those should be considered.

**Audience Question**

Q: On state website last addendum 7 update says was revised March 1, 2021 - when will update be posted?
A: Today and it is in the handouts