

Scientific Medical Advisory Committee, Alachua County: General Considerations

Reviewed January 29, 2021

The risk of transmission of SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) within a school setting includes a) the risk that infected students, teachers or staff will be present in schools (which is a function of transmission rates within the community), and b) the risk that once introduced into a school, the virus will be able to spread rapidly among members of the school community.

A variety of parameters have been proposed for assessing transmission rates of SARS-CoV-2 within a community. None of these metrics are perfect, and are dependent on a number of possible factors, including frequency and focus of testing in the community. In general, data on successful school openings come from areas with minimal evidence of SARS-CoV-2 community transmission, as reflected by low percentages of positive test results and low rates of daily new cases. We do not have good data on whether mitigation strategies are sufficient to stop school-based transmission when school openings coincide with higher levels of community virus transmission.

At a community level, Alachua County's data are consistent with moderate ongoing transmission of the virus. Under these circumstances, it is highly likely that the virus will be periodically introduced into the schools by students, teachers or staff. If schools are to open, prevention/mitigation efforts must include the following:

- Careful adherence to CDC guidelines, with a particular emphasis on masking and social distancing recommendations, including cohorting students (e.g. classes) with minimal to no interaction.
- When assigning teacher and staff responsibilities, consider risk factors and pre-existing health conditions.
- Implementation of procedures which will permit rapid identification of members of the school community infected with the virus, with associated isolation and appropriate quarantine of close contacts. Doing this will require:
 - Availability of adequate medical and public health personnel in schools, to assess and test students and teachers, and to do necessary contact tracing.
 - A system which will permit students and teachers suspected of being infected (or having come in contact with infected persons) to be tested on site, with results available within 48 hours
 - As required, consent forms for all students that permit testing (nasal swabs) of symptomatic and asymptomatic children by school nursing personnel
- Establishment of protocols for class/classroom and school quarantine and closure, depending on results of testing and contact tracing (see attached page and table)
- **Scientific Medical Advisory Committee (SMAC), Alachua County: Guidance for School and Classroom Risk Mitigation for COVID-19**
- Guidance subject to modification as epidemiologic details are established.
- Each scenario will be considered individually based on school, community, and household dynamics
- For K-12, assigned seating is strongly recommended for every class and for bus transportation. Bus seating should entail youngest students in front progressing to older students in back with windows open/ventilation maximized.
- K-5 classes should be cohorted, and middle/high school classes should be cohorted to the extent possible. K-12 classes with positive cases will be evaluated for isolation, quarantine and testing as investigation indicates.

LEVEL OF SCHOOL TRANSMISSION	SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS	METRICS	LEVEL OF MITIGATION	COMMENTS Consider broader community transmission
Substantial, uncontrolled transmission	Large scale, uncontrolled school transmission, including communal settings (e.g. classrooms, buses, offices)	Crisis Care implemented in hospital system or ≥ 3 closed schools in a clustered area within a county and evidence of school-based transmission.	School District Closed and/or Community Shelter in Place Orders. Public Health Advisory Issued by State Health Officer after consultation with SMAC	
Substantial, controlled transmission	Large scale, controlled school transmission, including communal settings (e.g., classrooms, buses, offices, sports teams, clubs)	10% of K-12 classrooms closed within 2 incubation periods (28 days)	Significant mitigation Close school after consultation w/ SMAC and State Health Officer	All school families advised to quarantine for 14 days
Minimal to moderate school transmission	Sustained transmission with high likelihood or confirmed exposure within communal settings (e.g., classrooms, buses, offices, sports teams, clubs) and potential for rapid increase in cases	Index case ≥ 3 cases in class/and or extracurricular activity OR teacher/coach confirmed positive, with potential for classroom/club/team transmission within 7 days. Outbreaks will be assessed on a case by case basis to inform level of mitigation recommendations.	Moderate mitigation For K-12: close/discontinue specific class/activity that meets threshold, test all students and teacher(s) in this class/team/club on day 0, 3 and 9, isolate positive cases for 10 days, and quarantine all test-negative persons at home for 14 days. Cohabiting school siblings/parents, household members, regardless of school attended should be quarantined at home for 14 days post positive test result.	All positive cases isolated at home for 10 days, and their family quarantined for 14 days. Students and teachers who initially test negative and are quarantined will be offered re-testing at day 3 and 9. If test negative on day 9, can return to school/extracurricular activity on day 10.
No to minimal school transmission	Evidence of isolated cases or limited school transmission, case investigations underway; no evidence of exposure in large communal setting	One confirmed positive case in one classroom	Low Mitigation: For K-12: Isolate confirmed positive case, quarantine contacts, test any child or teacher who subsequently becomes symptomatic. If evidence of classroom transmission (≥ 3 students/teacher tests positive within 7 days), close classroom for 14 days, positive students may return after 10 days if symptoms improve and fever free for > 24 hrs. before return date). If no evidence of classroom transmission, retest class and teacher(s) at day 3 and 9. Cohabiting school siblings, regardless of school attended should be quarantined at home for 14 days post positive test result.	Case is isolated at home for 10 days and their family quarantined for 14 days Students and teachers who are quarantined will be offered testing at day 3 and day 9. If test negative on day 9, can return to school on day 10.