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Date: January 18, 2022

To: All Schools in Nevada County

From: Jill Blake, Director, and Glennah Trochet, Deputy Health Officer, Nevada County Public Health Department (NCPH)

Subject: Adjustments to testing, isolation, and quarantine during the surge of cases of COVID-19 in Nevada County due to the Omicron variant.

Currently Nevada County is experiencing an unprecedented surge of cases of COVID-19. On January 14, 2022 the 7-day average case rate was 110.1/100,000, the highest rate that has been reported since the pandemic began. It is likely that this wave of infections is due to the Omicron variant that has been circulating in California since late December. This variant is extremely infectious but may cause less severe disease. It is unknown if it can cause long-term symptoms or disability as previous variants are known to do.

The California Department of Public Health(CDPH) has issued new isolation and quarantine guidance for the general public, that Nevada County Public Health has adopted in its general orders of isolation and quarantine. Educational institutions may use these guidelines, found at <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/Guidance-on-Isolation-and-Quarantine-for-COVID-19-Contact-Tracing.aspx>, to manage employees and staff who are exposed to or diagnosed with COVID-19.

Regarding students, CDPH has issued new guidance providing the option of "Group tracing" for students exposed to COVID-19 and has authorized schools to implement new guidance to shorten isolation for students who test negative on day 5 of isolation, provided that their symptoms, if present, are resolving and had no fever for 24 hours without the use of anti-fever medications. These students must also mask for the remaining five days of the isolation period. If unable to mask, the student must isolate at home for 10 days.

NCPH no longer requires schools to report contacts to NCPH, but schools should continue to report students who test positive for COVID-19.

NCPH also endorses the CDPH guidance for isolation and quarantine of students, including group tracing.

NCPH staff are aware that there is a shortage of testing supplies as well as decreased staffing to administer these tests. SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, is circulating widely throughout Nevada County. Every student attending school has probably been exposed recently to the virus. Until February 28, 2022 or sooner, if the current surge recedes to manageable

levels, staff attendance improves, and testing supplies become more available, NCPH authorizes schools to do the following:

1. Issue **blanket exposure notifications**. Notify all students participating in in-person instruction that they have likely been exposed. As a result, all students are being placed in quarantine while still attending class.
2. During quarantine, students may remain on campus if they wear a mask at all times indoors and are **recommended (but not required) to test at least once a week**, regardless of their vaccination status. **Eating and drinking should be done outdoors** whenever possible.
3. Any student on quarantine who develops COVID-19 **symptoms must be excluded from campus** and tested. If COVID-19 test is positive, follow CDPH isolation recommendations. If COVID-19 test is negative, student may return after 24 hours without fever, and symptoms improving. Untested symptomatic students must be excluded from campus for 10 days.
4. During quarantine, any students participating in **unmasked sports or band are required to test at least twice weekly**, regardless of their vaccination status.
5. Results from home testing using an FDA authorized over-the-counter test for COVID-19 may be accepted by schools if their policies allow.
6. Special arrangements should be made for medically fragile students who are attending classes in person. NCPH staff is available for consultation to help determine how to keep these students safe at school during these unprecedented times.

NCPH continues to monitor the situation and is available for consultation if questions about this memo arise.