# Gov. Stitt, Oklahoma State Department Of Health Announce Change To School Quarantine

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**OKLAHOMA CITY (Jan. 12, 2021)** — Governor Kevin Stitt announced today that Oklahoma schools following safety protocols, including mask-wearing and social distancing, will be permitted to forgo the mandatory two-week quarantine period for potential COVID-19 exposures.

Gov. Stitt and Commissioner of Health Dr. Lance Frye emphasized the new Oklahoma State Department of Health policy is intended to keep students and teachers safe in school while also incentivizing mask usage and other precautions for school districts across the state.

**"We need to put our students first, and we need to get them back in class,"** said Gov. Stitt.

**“Refusing to offer in-person school is jeopardizing our kids' education; it’s jeopardizing teachers' careers; and it’s jeopardizing the future of the State of Oklahoma. Today, we’re announcing a new policy that will help us keep schools open safely. It will also help encourage and reward mask wearing in schools across the state. Moving forward, schools that enforce the use of masks will not have to quarantine students that were potentially exposed to COVID-19 unless they are showing symptoms.”**

As part of the new policy, schools should continue to require quarantines for exposed students in situations where masking and distancing protocols were not followed. Additionally, the updated quarantine guidance does not apply if the exposure occurs during after-school activities, including sports. Anyone who tests positive for COVID-19 must continue to isolate regardless where they contracted the virus or were wearing a mask.

The State is prioritizing vaccinations for teachers who are 65 and older this week and next and will open vaccinations up to all teachers as soon as vaccine availability allows. The state will also double the amount of rapid antigen tests provided to schools to encourage frequent testing to catch any positive cases early.

**“As a physician, I follow the science, and it’s been critical to our COVID-19 response to do so,”** said Commissioner Frye. **“But it’s also important to look at factors on the ground, and schools have proven to be one of the safest places for most of our students. Other states such as Missouri, Utah and Ohio have put similar quarantine policies into place and haven’t seen large outbreaks occur in schools. This aligns with the trends we’ve seen in our own state, largely thanks to our parents, students, teachers and school administrators who have been doing an outstanding job following precautions and keeping our students safe.”**

Frye added, **“Data also shows—and the CDC recommends—that getting students safely back to in-person learning is critical for their educational success, mental health and social development. Our public health decisions need to balance all facets of health, and we’re confident this new policy will allow our students to safely thrive in the classroom.”**

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