



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

GOVERNOR NED LAMONT

## Governor Lamont Announces the Screen and Stay Initiative for Connecticut Schools

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(HARTFORD, CT) – Governor Ned Lamont today announced the rollout of the Screen and Stay initiative for Connecticut schools that choose to participate. Under the initiative, students and staff identified as close contacts to a known COVID-19 case but who are not yet fully vaccinated will be able to remain in school if they were wearing masks and don't develop symptoms.

The initiative will bring immediate relief to the frequent and repeated quarantines that continue to impact student learning and place a burden on working families. The innovative, multi-agency solution will aid school districts through the remainder of the fall.

Students and staff are eligible to participate if the close contact with a COVID-19 case occurs under the following circumstances:

- Exclusively during the school day (no extracurricular or social contact);
- If indoors or on a school bus or other school transportation, and both the contact and the COVID-19 case were consistently masked during the exposure even if brief unmasked periods (e.g., snack time, cafeteria) occurred, as long as six feet or more of space was consistently maintained;
- If outdoors, the individuals were masked or unmasked but were supervised by staff (e.g., mask breaks, physical education, recess);
- The close contact remains asymptomatic (any symptoms revert to regular isolation/quarantine).

Examples of close contact scenarios that do not support a Screen and Stay approach would be:

- Contact with a case during interscholastic or other athletic activities (other than during supervised outdoor physical education and recess);

- Contact occurring during social interactions or similar activities outside of school (e.g., birthday parties, dining out, sleepovers);
- Contact where the individuals were not consistently and correctly wearing masks indoors and a six-foot distance was not maintained;
- The contact occurred between members of the same household (i.e., the contact lives with the case);
- If, upon return to school, the contact cannot consistently and correctly wear a mask.

“Throughout this pandemic, we’ve consistently done our best to maintain a safe learning environment for all students and staff, while also understanding that students achieve the greatest outcomes when they have access to in-person learning,” **Governor Lamont said**. “The recent approval of the COVID-19 vaccines for children between the ages of 5 and 11 marks an incredibly promising development in these ongoing efforts. While that rollout occurs, the Screen and Stay initiative will help ensure that more students can remain in school and we can provide a safe, in-person learning environment.”

“As a state, we have continued to reinforce throughout the pandemic that access to in-person learning opportunities is a priority, particularly due to the significance of the supportive social-emotional environment provided through student and adult interactions during the school day,” **Connecticut Education Commissioner Charlene M. Russell-Tucker said**. “Screen and Stay advances our commitment to in-person schooling, where our students learn best.”

“Vaccination remains the easiest way to avoid quarantine from school after being exposed to someone with COVID-19,” **Connecticut Public Health Commissioner Dr. Manisha Juthani said**. “Our youngest school-age children finally have this opportunity, as well. However, because Connecticut’s community case-rate is stable-to-decreasing, this innovative program can protect students and staff in schools while also prioritizing their social and emotional well-being. Connecticut’s school mitigation strategies remain very strong with high rates of compliance resulting in infrequent cases of transmission in school buildings.”

“Screen and Stay is a creative, family-inclusive, and promising practice that will allow our children to be in-person learners, which we know is incredibly important to their success,” **Fran Rabinowitz, executive director of the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents, said**.

“The Screen and Stay initiative is a scientifically based, effective approach to keeping teachers and students safe and keeping schools open,” **Connecticut Education Association President Kate Dias said**. “These have always been our top priorities. The program, while completely voluntary, allows asymptomatic teachers and students to safely remain in school – where teaching and learning are best – without the chaotic disruptions, loss of learning, and family burdens caused by quarantines.”

“Throughout this pandemic, science has been our north star,” **Jan Hochadel, president of the American Federation of Teachers Connecticut, said**. “It has provided a road map for the many decisions we’ve made as labor leaders when it comes to the health and safety of our members and their students. Data shows that in-person learning is what’s best for a child’s academic growth, as well as their social-emotional well-being.”

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