December 7, 2020

Canton Warrior Community:

The purpose of this correspondence is to provide you with a brief overview of the “Updated Quarantine Recommendations for Persons Exposed to COVID-19” issued by the Pennsylvania Department of Health on December 4, 2020. On December 2, 2020, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) updated their recommendations for quarantine of people exposed to SARS-CoV-2 to include options to reduce the quarantine period.

The recommendation for a 14-day quarantine was based on estimates of the upper bounds of the COVID-19 incubation period. Quarantine’s importance was highlighted after it became evident that persons are able to transmit SARS-CoV-2 before symptoms develop, and that a substantial portion of infected persons never develop symptomatic illness but can still transmit the virus. In this context, quarantine is a critical measure to control transmission.

While a shortened quarantine period may increase the public’s willingness to adhere to public health recommendations, the overall reduction in transmission and increased compliance will require evaluation; not only in terms of compliance with quarantine and contact tracing activities, but also for any potential negative impacts such as post-quarantine transmission. The most protective recommended quarantine period remains at 14 days post exposure.

After reviewing the recommendations and research from the CDC, DOH recommends the following alternative options to a 14-day quarantine:

* Quarantine can end after Day 10 without testing and if **no symptoms** have been reported during daily monitoring. However, it is recommended that symptom monitoring continue until Day 14.
* If diagnostic testing resources are sufficient and available, quarantine can end after Day 7 if a diagnostic specimen tests negative and if no symptoms were reported during daily monitoring.
  + The specimen must be collected and tested within 48 hours before the time of planned quarantine discontinuation (e.g., in anticipation of testing delays), but quarantine cannot be discontinued earlier than after Day 7.
  + In order to discontinue quarantine after Day 7, specimens must be collected on or after Day 5.

Persons can discontinue quarantine at these time points only if the following criteria are also met:

* No clinical evidence of COVID-19 has been elicited by daily symptom monitoring during the entirety of quarantine up to the time at which quarantine is discontinued; and,
* Daily symptom monitoring continues through quarantine Day 14; and,
* Persons are counseled regarding the need to adhere strictly through Day 14 after exposure to all recommended non-pharmaceutical interventions (e.g., masking, physical distancing).
  + If any symptoms develop, they should immediately self-isolate and contact the DOH at 1- 877-PA-HEALTH, their local health department or their healthcare provider to report this change in clinical status.

Moving forward, the Canton Area School District will adopt these new quarantining guidelines and allow students and staff to re-enter our school environment through the testing process outlined above or after a 10-day quarantine without any symptoms being present. Recall, in the past, if you lived with a “case,” you were required to isolate and quarantine for a total of 24 days. Under the new guidance, you still must isolate for the first 10 days, however, you may get tested on the 15th day and if you have no symptoms and the results come back by the 17th day, you can report to school/work. However, if you choose not to get tested throughout your isolation and quarantine period, you can return to school or work after 20 days.

Today, we reached out to all the families, students, and staff who will be impacted by this current order and provided them with a new “return date” to our campus. Please note that this new quarantine process also affects the travel quarantine requirements. We continue to appreciate your cooperation and understanding as we look to adapt our system to these new changes.

Yours in Education,

Eric Briggs

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