**VPI Instructional Disruptions Related to COVID-19**

**FAQ**

**2021-2022**

***Updated September 2021***

As VPI programs are opening classrooms for return to in-person learning amidst changing public health conditions, we have received inquiries regarding VPI programming and instruction during a school, classroom, or community-provider closure, quarantine of VPI students, and the use of remote instruction.

Recognizing the ongoing impact of COVID-19 and the anticipated need for closures and/or quarantine, VPI programs should be prepared for instructional disruptions at the school/provider-, classroom-, and student-level. This FAQ provides guidance on these topics for VPI settings, and is intended to assist VPI programs in planning for these disruptions in a manner consistent with [state law](https://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?212+ful+CHAP0456), [VPI Appropriation Act requirements](https://budget.lis.virginia.gov/item/2021/2/HB1800/Chapter/1/145/), and VDOE [VPI guidance on virtual instruction](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/early-childhood/preschool/vpi/vpi-virtual-instruction-guidance-may-2021.docx) as it relates to requirements for VPI instructional time.

## What are the guidelines and expectations for offering VPI as Virtual Instruction for 2021-2022?

In addition to the statutorily-required, in-person learning offerings, divisions may also offer part- and full-time remote programs as an option to students for the 2021-2022 school year. On May 3, 2021 the VDOE shared a Superintendent’s Email with guidance on virtual instruction as it relates to requirements for VPI instructional time.

This guidance remains in place for any regular, ongoing VPI instruction offered as an option to families during the 2021-2022 school year. This [guidance](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/early-childhood/preschool/vpi/vpi-virtual-instruction-guidance-may-2021.docx) that was included in the Superintendent email has since been posted on the Early Childhood Care & Education webpage.

## How can we prepare for instructional interruptions during the 2021-2022 school year?

[Superintendent’s Memo #230-21](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/administrators/superintendents_memos/2021/230-21.pdf), posted on August 18, 2021, provides guidance to school divisions in planning for COVID-19 related disruptions to instruction including pre-K classrooms. The memo highlights two pieces of legislation that apply to school-based programs:

* [Senate Bill 1303](https://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?212%2Bsum%2BSB1303&amp;212%2Bsum%2BSB1303), requires public school-based early childhood care and education programs, including VPI, to offer in-person instruction for the entirety of the instructional time mandated by program requirements.
* [House Bill 1790](https://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?212+ful+CHAP0019) and [Senate Bill 1132](https://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?212+ful+CHAP0293) (HB1790/SB1132) provide divisions with new options to employ remote learning on unscheduled remote learning days which may be utilized in limited circumstances.

Divisions should be prepared for school- or classroom-level closures when public health conditions necessitate. Closure decisions should be made in consultation with local health departments. If a school is closed consistent with the circumstances outlined in Section 3 of SB1303, then any remote instruction provided during these closures may be considered an “unscheduled remote learning day.”

Pursuant to HB1790/SB1132, a school or division may utilize up to 10 unscheduled remote learning days due to emergency circumstances, including for COVID-related closures. The division must ensure the equitable provision of services to students on such unscheduled remote learning days, in accordance with VDOE guidance. If a division exceeds 10 unscheduled remote learning days due to COVID-19 related closures or other triggering events, the division will need approval from the Superintendent of Public Instruction to ensure that division funding is not impacted. Divisions should review the [VDOE’s Guidance for Unscheduled Remote Learning Days](https://townhall.virginia.gov/l/GetFile.cfm?File=C:%5CTownHall%5Cdocroot%5CGuidanceDocs_Proposed%5C201%5CGDoc_DOE_4887_20210707.pdf) for specific information on unscheduled remote learning days.

## What is the difference between isolation and quarantine?

Isolation separates people diagnosed with COVID 19 from people who are not sick. Quarantine separates and restricts the movement of people who were exposed to COVID 19 for a period of time to see if they become sick. These people may have been exposed to COVID 19 and do not know it, or they may have the virus but do not show symptoms. The CDC has an infographic [COVID 19: Quarantine Versus Isolation](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/COVID-19-Quarantine-vs-Isolation.pdf) to help people understand. The difference as the terms are often used interchangeably.

## What are the action steps expected when there is a “close contact” in pre-K classrooms?

For pre-K, a close contact is defined as being within 6 feet of an individual with COVID-19 for a total of 15 minutes or more in a 24 hour period, or having direct exposure to respiratory secretions. More information is available through the Virginia Department of Health [Interim Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in Virginia PreK-12 Schools](https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/content/uploads/sites/182/2021/03/Interim-Guidance-to-K-12-School-Reopening.pdf). Note that the close contact exception that applies to K-12 classrooms does not apply to pre-K classrooms.

Divisions should be working closely with local health departments to conduct contact tracing, and work to support impacted families. Quarantine lengths may range from 7 to 14 days, depending on local health condition, the nature of the exposure, and the school division’s policy.

VDH provides an [infographic](https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/content/uploads/sites/182/2020/04/Home-IsolationQuarantine-Release-Graphic_FINAL.pdf) on when it is safe to end quarantine and be around others.

## What if a child develops COVID 19 symptoms at home or in a child care setting?

An [infographic](https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/content/uploads/sites/182/2020/10/Child-School-COVID-19-Algorithm-Infographics2020-FINAL.pdf) provided by VDH provides a helpful tool for evaluating a child with COVID-19 symptoms while at school and next steps for child care facilities to follow.

## What should be provided for pre-K students in quarantine or school closure?

VPI Programs should have a plan in place at all sites to maximize instructional hours provided to all VPI students in the case of required closures, in all VPI settings (school-based and community-based) due to quarantines or closures. Closure decisions should be made in consultation with local health departments. VPI programs should have policies and procedures — for instruction transition, attendance, and enrollment — in place for during school or classroom closure, and to support quarantined students.

VPI programs should be prepared to support students who are healthy enough to participate in virtual, synchronous instruction during quarantines. For remote learning due to quarantine, students should be counted as present or absent per that division’s policy on attendance tracking and monitoring for any remote learning day. If a division does not offer remote learning to a quarantined student, the student should be counted as absent. This circumstance should be extremely rare, as divisions should be prepared to support students who are healthy enough to participate in remote learning during quarantine or classroom closures. It should be noted that school divisions must ensure that VPI students with disabilities are offered a free and appropriate public education in accordance with federal and state regulations and guidance.

If a VPI classroom or subset of a school is closed consistent with the circumstances outlined in Section 3 of SB1303, any remote learning should still be delivered in alignment with [VDOE’s Guidance for Unscheduled Remote Learning Days](https://townhall.virginia.gov/l/GetFile.cfm?File=C:%5CTownHall%5Cdocroot%5CGuidanceDocs_Proposed%5C201%5CGDoc_DOE_4887_20210707.pdf). However, the school would not need to count these closures towards the allowed 10 unscheduled remote learning days but schools should seek to recover any in-person instructional time lost due to the classroom closure.

Finally, in addition to instructional supports, VPI programs should be prepared to direct parents and students to mental health and social emotional resources during quarantine and/or isolation.

## What resources are available to provide health and safety guidance to VPI programs while working to help prevent the spread of COVID-19?

A variety of guidance documents issued by the CDC, VDH and VDOE continue to be revised regularly to ensure divisions, parents and communities have the latest information. These include but are not limited to:

* [The Interim Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in Virginia PreK-12 Schools](https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/content/uploads/sites/182/2021/03/Interim-Guidance-to-K-12-School-Reopening.pdf)
* [CDC Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 SchoolsThis link takes you out of the Virginia Department of Education website](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html)
* [Other VDH K-12 ResourcesThis link takes you out of the Virginia Department of Education website](https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus/schools-workplaces-community-locations/k-12-education/)
* [Other CDC Resources for SchoolsThis link takes you out of the Virginia Department of Education website](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/index.html)
* [American Academy of Pediatrics,  Back to School Virginia](http://www.virginiapediatrics.org/school-reopening/backtoschool/)[VDH Back to School Communications, Webpage](https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/backtoschool/)