**Glossary**

**Antigen Test:** Rapid antigen tests, which detect protein on the surface of the virus, are less sensitive and less specific than a PCR/molecular test. This means they miss some infections that would be detected by a PCR/molecular test, and they may be positive in someone who does not actually have the infection. However, they can be performed without having to send the sample to a laboratory and results come back quickly (e.g., approximately 15 minutes). For this test, a sample may be collected through a nasal swab, and the test can be conducted inside a doctor’s office, or even at a school that meets the right set of requirements.

**Asymptomatic:** Not showing any symptoms (signs of disease or illness). Some people without any symptoms still have and can spread the coronavirus. They’re asymptomatic, but contagious.

**Close Contact:** Someone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period starting from 2 days before symptoms began (or, for asymptomatic individuals, 2 days prior to test specimen collection date) until the time the individual is isolated. NOTE that CDC in its guidance update dated 7/9/21 stated an exception for K-12 students when exposure was 3 to 6 feet of an infected student, where both students were engaged in consistent and correct use of well-fitting masks, and other prevention strategies were in place in the K-12 school setting.

**Cluster:** Five or more positive COVID-19 cases in a setting within 14 days of one another, that have an epidemiological linkage between them (e.g., presumed COVID-19 transmission within a school classroom.) Note: An “outbreak” is a specific term used for a congregate living setting, such as a nursing home, when there are two or more cases connected to each other. A cluster and an outbreak are not the same thing.

**Cohort:** A group of non-overlapping children, teachers and staff who are designated to follow identical schedules. Keeping clear and distinct schedules helps with contract tracing, should it be necessary.

**Communicable:** Similar in meaning as “contagious.” Used to describe diseases that can be spread or transmitted from one person to another.

**Community Spread:** The spread of an illness within a location, like a neighborhood or town. During community spread, there’s no clear source of contact or infection.

**Confirmed Case:** Someone tested and confirmed to have COVID-19.

**Coronavirus:** A family of related viruses. Many of them cause respiratory illnesses. Coronavirus causes COVID-19, SARS, MERS, and some strains of influenza, or flu. The coronavirus that causes COVID-19 is officially called SARS-CoV-2, which stands for severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2.

**COVID-19:** The name of the illness caused by the coronavirus SARS-CoV-2. COVID-19 stands for “coronavirus disease 2019.”

**Exclusion:** An individual is not allowed to attend school in person in order to isolate because they are, or are presumed to be, COVID-positive, or to quarantine to ensure they do not expose others if they may become COVID-positive.

**Exposure:** Being within 6 feet of someone diagnosed with COVID-19 for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more, over a 24-hour period.

**Fully vaccinated:** Status of a person two weeks after receiving the last dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. (Second dose of a 2-dose vaccine, or 1st dose of one-dose vaccine.)

**Incubation Period:** The time it takes for someone with an infection to start showing symptoms. For COVID-19, symptoms appear 2-14 days after infection.

**Isolation:** When someone tests positive for COVID-19 or is presumed to be positive, they separate (isolate) themselves from others for a minimum of 10 days to make sure they do not spread the virus. This is not the same thing as quarantining, which is for someone who is NOT known to be positive with COVID but has had a close contact.

**Local Health Department:** An administrative or service unit of local or state government concerned with health and carrying out some responsibility for the health of a jurisdiction smaller than the state.

**PCR Testing:** Polymerase chain reaction (PCR)/molecular tests detect the virus’s genetic material. This test is the “gold standard” for detecting the virus that causes COVID-19 and typically requires a sample being sent to a laboratory. For this test, it is most common that samples are collected through a nasal or throat swab.

**Pandemic:** When a new disease spreads to many countries around the world.

**Physical Distancing:** Also called social distancing. It means consistently putting space between yourself and other people. The goal is to slow down how fast an
infection spreads. The CDC recommends keeping at least three feet between students, and six feet between adults. Physical distancing also includes avoiding crowds and groups in public.

**PPE:** PPE Stands for personal protective equipment. This includes masks, face shields, gloves, gowns and other coverings that help prevent the spread of infection.

**Presumptive Positive Case:** A person who has COVID-19 symptoms but has not been confirmed positive by a health care provider or through a PCR/molecular test.

**Quarantine:** Quarantine refers to the time spent away from other people by an individual who has been in close contact (within 6 feet for at least 15 minutes cumulatively over a 24-hour period) with someone who is positive with COVID-19. A person exposed to COVID-19 may quarantine for up to 14 days – the incubation period of the virus. This is not the same thing as isolation, which is for someone who is known to be positive with COVID-19.

**Symptomatic:** When a person shows signs of illness. For COVID-19, that includes new cough, fever, shortness of breath, or new loss of taste or smell.

**Testing:** Testing is used to diagnose cases of COVID-19. Anyone with COVID-19 symptoms, those who have been around others with symptoms or others who have tested positively, and high-risk members of the population should consider testing for COVID-19. The most common tests are the molecular PCR test and the antigen test, both of which seek to determine whether a person currently is infected with COVID-19. The NCDHHS hosts testing sites regularly throughout the state.

**Symptom Screening:** A series of basic questions about a person’s health condition and recent potential exposure to someone who has had COVID-19. This is not the same thing as a COVID-19 test. Symptom screenings are optional for NC K-12 schools.

**Social Distancing:** Also called physical distancing. It means consistently putting space between yourself and other people. The goal is to slow down how fast an infection spreads. The CDC recommends keeping at least six feet between you and others around you in public. Social distancing also includes avoiding crowds and groups in public.