

ACUSD Board COVID-19 Update

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COVID-19 Situation Report:

Amador Resident Confirmed Cases to Date: 327

Active Cases Today: 29 (cases are released from Isolation when they are no longer contagious)

Current County Tier Assignment: Orange (Moderate)

You may recall that the epidemiologic threshold that allows schools to reopen is at least 2 weeks in the Red (Substantial) Tier. Once schools have reopened, they will not need to close if a county moves back to the more restrictive Purple (Widespread) tier.

On the State's Blueprint for a Safer Economy, Amador County moved from the Purple to Red Tier on Sept 8, then from Red to the Orange Tier on Sept 29. The earliest date schools could have reopened in-person in Amador County would have been Sept 23. Over the past 2 weeks, like much of the rest of the country, Amador County is experiencing a surge in COVID-19 cases. We are at risk of moving back to a more restrictive tier, most likely Red, next week. If case rates or test positivity rate continue to increase, Amador County could even move back to the Purple Tier in future weeks.

Current Amador case counts by episode date:

- 30 during the week of Oct 18-24
- 18 so far for the week of Oct 25-31

Current Amador test positivity rate: 2.8% (7-day average with 7-day lag)

Each week's Tier assignment is based on the higher of the two indicators (whichever is more restrictive), using a 7-day average with 7-day lag assessment of the data.

From the State's FAQs regarding school reopening:

My county was once eligible for school reopening (i.e., red tier for 14 + days), but has since become ineligible (i.e., reverted back to purple tier). Is my school permitted to reopen for in-person instruction?

No. On July 17, CDPH published the school reopening framework, which provided that a school may reopen for in-person instruction only if its county has been off the County Monitoring List for 14 days. Since then, the framework has been adapted to reflect the Blueprint for a Safer Economy, providing that a county must be in Red Tier (equivalent of being off the County Monitoring List) for 14 days for schools in that county to be eligible to reopen for in-person instruction. Schools must have actually reopened for in-person instruction while the county was in the Red Tier in order to remain open if the county moves back to Purple Tier. If the county is in purple tier on the day the school plans to reopen for in-person instruction, the school must wait until it is eligible again (i.e., county in red tier for 14+ days).

If a school was implementing a phased re-opening (e.g., only opened grades 9-10 for in-person instruction with set plans to phase in grades 11 and 12) while the county was in the Red Tier, the school site may continue their phase re-opening when the county reverts back to the Purple Tier, if authorized by Local Health Officer. This is only applicable to individual school sites. If a district has a phased reopening of their schools, the schools in that district that did not open for in person instruction may not re-open until the county is back in the Red Tier for 2 weeks.

The tier assignment color does NOT correspond to the level at which schools open (hybrid vs. full opening) nor to guidance for use of more or fewer safety mitigation measures that are to be implemented within the school setting. Like other businesses and activities, schools need to use physical distancing, face coverings, frequent hand hygiene and enhanced sanitation, which are all key in limiting the risk of the virus' spread within any group of people outside of one's own household.

Regarding physical distancing, the school guidance calls for 6 feet between student desk chairs "as practicable." That means that if seating distance of slightly less than 6 feet will allow for a few more students to participate in classroom-based learning, that can be accommodated. Everyone properly and consistently wearing face coverings becomes even more important if the spacing is less than 6 feet. And the distance between the teacher and student desks should be kept at least 6 feet apart.

When it comes to testing, the California Department of Public Health framework recommends that when the community transmission level increases, screening testing for teachers and staff should be considered. Based on the increased COVID-19 case levels that have been occurring in Amador County over the past few weeks, Public Health is assisting the school district to offer screening testing for ACUSD teachers and staff during the week prior to re-opening the school sites.

Even daily testing for the virus would not be a substitute for infection control and distancing since it does not prevent someone from becoming infected and passing the virus along to others. Because of the virus' long incubation period, even a person who has recently tested negative for the virus could be positive within hours of testing and can infect other people unknowingly. In that situation, a negative test can provide a false sense of security. Everyone needs to continue to practice physical distancing, use of face coverings and good hygiene regardless of testing.