

NYS Micro-Cluster Strategy Explained

Last month, Governor Cuomo announced a new cluster action initiative to address COVID-19 hot spots that have popped up around the state. The initiative divides clusters and the areas around them into three categories – the cluster itself (red zone), a warning zone (orange zone), and a precautionary zone (yellow zone).

Once our region is given one of these zone designations, there are certain requirements districts must meet in order to stay open for or return to in-person instruction.

Yellow Zone Designation: occurs when average positivity rate is above 3% for 10 days

- District may remain open but must begin mandatory testing immediately
- District required to test 20% of in-person students, teachers and staff at each school, at least once a week for as long as the region remains in a designated yellow zone
 - Example: the first 20% of all hybrid students and staff would be tested on week one of yellow zone designation, the second 20% of all hybrid students and staff would be tested on week two of yellow zone designation, etc. After five weeks, the first group is tested again if the region is still under the yellow designation.

Orange Zone Designation: occurs when average positivity rate is above 4% for 10 days

Red Zone Designation: occurs when average positivity rate is above 5% for 10 days

- District must remain closed for at least four (4) calendar days after the zone designation is announced
- District may re-open as early as the fifth day after the zone is designated, only after 100% of students, faculty, and staff provide proof of a negative COVID-19 test result
- Upon reopening, district will continue intensive daily health screening for all hybrid in-person students and staff
- Upon reopening, district required to test 25% of in-person students, teachers and staff, at least once a week for as long as the region remains in a designated orange or red zone
 - Example: the first 25% of all hybrid students and staff would be tested on week one of orange/red zone designation, the second 25% of all hybrid students and staff would be tested on week two of orange/red zone designation, etc. After four weeks, the first group is tested again if the region is still under the orange/red designation.

	YELLOW ZONE	ORANGE ZONE	RED ZONE
METRICS FOR NYS ZONE DESIGNATION	Geographic area has a 7-day rolling average positivity above 3% for 10 days	Geographic area has a 7-day rolling average positivity above 4% for 10 days	Geographic area has a 7-day rolling average positivity above 5% for 10 days
REQUIRED BUILDING CLOSURE	No	Yes; At least 4 calendar days	Yes; At least 4 calendar days
LEARNING FORMATS IN PLACE	Hybrid In-person Remote-only	Remote-only during closure; Hybrid In-person only after negative test result	Remote-only during closure; Hybrid In-person only after negative test result
MANDATORY COVID-19 TESTING	Yes; 20% of all students/staff weekly	Yes; 25% of all students/staff weekly	Yes; 25% of all students/staff weekly