OAKLAND COUNTY MICHIGAN
HEALTH DIVISION
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OAKLAND COUNTY EXECUTIVE

BACK TO SCHOOL GUIDANCE

COVID-19 PREVENTION IN K-12 SCHOOLS

This guidance is subject to change based on State and Federal guidelines/mandates.

CORONAVIRUS
COVID-19

Oakland County Health Division (OCHD) recognizes the importance of returning students to school campuses for in-person instruction while protecting the health and safety of our students, school staff, and broader community from COVID-19. Safety in schools starts by:

- Ongoing vaccination efforts for eligible students.
- Keeping children home when sick.

This guidance is designed to support all public and private K-12 schools to:

- Guide planning for the 2021-2022 school year in accordance with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance.
- Identify layered prevention strategies to reduce COVID-19 transmission in the school setting and minimize disruption to in-person learning.

OCHD recognizes the challenges districts may face in implementing layered mitigation recommendations. As a result, the expectation is that districts will implement as many mitigation measures as possible to reduce the risk of transmission for students, teachers, and staff.

GENERAL INFORMATION

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a disease caused by a virus called SARS-CoV-2 that can be spread from person to person.

How does COVID-19 spread?

COVID-19 spreads when an infected person breathes out droplets and very small particles that contain the virus. These droplets and particles can be breathed in by other people or land on their eyes, noses, or mouth. In some circumstances, they may contaminate surfaces they touch. People who are closer than 6 feet from the infected person are most likely to get infected.

COVID-19 is spread in three main ways:

- Breathing in air when close to an infected person who is exhaling small droplets and particles that contain the virus.
- Having these small droplets and particles that contain virus land on the eyes, nose, or mouth, especially through splashes and sprays like a cough or sneeze.
- Touching eyes, nose, or mouth with hands that have the virus on them.

Anyone infected with COVID-19 can spread it, even if they do NOT have symptoms.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Symptoms may appear in 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. Common symptoms are:

- ○ Chills/Fever (100.4 degrees or higher)
- ○ Muscle or body aches
- ○ Congestion or runny nose
- ○ New loss of taste or smell
- ○ Shortness of breath/difficulty breathing
- ○ Cough
- ○ Sore throat
- ○ Fatigue
- ○ Diarrhea (2x in 24 hours)
- ○ Nausea/vomiting (2x in 24 hours)

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DEFINITIONS

- **Isolation:** Separates someone who is sick or tested positive for COVID-19 without symptoms from people who are not sick. People in isolation must stay home until it is safe to be around others. In the home, anyone sick or infected must separate themselves from others by staying a specific “sick room” or area and using a separate bathroom, if available.
- **Quarantine:** Separates and restricts the movement of a person who was identified as a close contact to someone who has COVID-19 to see if they become sick.
- **Fully Vaccinated:** A person is considered fully vaccinated 2 weeks after their second dose of the Pfizer or Moderna COVID-19 vaccines, or 2 weeks after the single-dose Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine.
- **Up-to-date:** A person has received all recommended COVID-19 vaccines, including booster dose(s) when eligible.
- **Close Contact:** A person who was within 6 feet of a person infected with COVID-19 for more than 15 minutes with or without a mask.
- **Contact Tracing:** A strategy for slowing the spread of disease in which public health workers communicate with infectious people to identify their contacts. They then follow up with those contacts to provide guidance on how to quarantine themselves and what to do if they develop symptoms of disease.

MITIGATION STRATEGIES TO REDUCE COVID-19

Per CDC the following COVID-19 prevention strategies are recommended to protect the health and safety of our students, staff and the broader community from COVID-19 while keeping students safe and present in school with minimal disruption.

1. **Promoting Vaccination**
   Achieving high levels of COVID-19 vaccination among eligible students as well as teachers, staff, and household members is one of the most critical strategies to help schools safely resume full operations. Schools are strongly recommended to actively promote vaccination for all eligible students, staff and community members.
2. **Stay home when sick**
   Parents/caregivers should be strongly encouraged to monitor their children for signs of illness every day as they are the front line for assessing illness in their children.

- Staff/students that have been fully vaccinated but are infected with COVID-19 variants can spread the virus to others. To reduce the risk of becoming infected and potentially spreading it to others the CDC recommends the following:
  - Consider wearing a mask in public indoor spaces
  - Get tested if experiencing COVID-19 symptoms
  - Isolate if test positive or are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19
  - Get tested between 3-5 days following exposure to someone with suspected/confirmed COVID-19

3. **Masks**

   Per the CDC, people may choose to mask at any time. People with symptoms, a positive test, or exposure to someone with COVID-19 should wear a mask. Schools should follow the CDC's COVID-19 Community Level masking guidelines.

Masks should:

- Completely cover the nose and mouth.
- Fit snugly against the sides of the face and not have any gaps.
- Be handled only by the ear loops, cords, or head straps (not by the surface of the mask).

Masks should not be worn by:

- Persons in the act of eating or drinking.
- Persons under the age of four years; however, supervised masking is recommended for children who are at least two years of age.
- Persons who have a medical reason confirmed in writing from a Medical Doctor (MD) or Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (DO) currently licensed to practice medicine in the State of Michigan.
- Anyone with a disability who cannot wear a mask, or cannot safely wear a mask, for reasons related to the disability.
- Anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the face covering without assistance.
- Students with special needs who are unable to tolerate a face covering.
- Anyone swimming.
- Anyone communicating with someone who is deaf, deafblind, or hard of hearing and when the ability to see the mouth is essential to communication.

4. **Physical Distancing**
   - Maintain a minimum of three feet of distance between students in classroom settings to the extent possible.
   - Maintain cohorts or groups of students with dedicated staff who remain together throughout the day, including at recess, lunchtimes, and while participating in extracurricular activities.

   Consider structural interventions within classrooms to aid with physical distancing including:
   - Facing desks in the same direction.
   - Avoiding grouped seating arrangements.

Outside of the classroom schools should consider approaches to implement physical distancing in the following areas that may pose greater risk of transmission:

- In common areas, in spaces where students may gather such as hallways and auditoriums.
- When masks may be removed, such as during outdoor activities.
- During indoor activities when increased exhalation occurs, such as singing, band practice, sports, or exercise.

Large Gatherings

Brings together many people from multiple households in a private or public space. The more steps you can take, the safer you will be at a gathering. No one measure is enough to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Recommendations include:

- Wear a mask
- Wash hands often
- Stay at least 6 feet away from people who do not live with you
- Avoid crowded, poorly ventilated indoor spaces

Meals

The following prevention strategies are recommended when meals are offered in cafeterias or other group dining areas to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19:

- Maintain physical distancing between students and staff.
- Stagger eating times to allow for greater physical distancing.
- Maintain student cohorts. Limit mixing between groups.
- Avoid offering self-serve food options.
- Discourage students from sharing meals.
- Encourage routine cleaning between groups.
- Encourage outdoor meals when possible.

Transportation

- If occupancy allows, maximize physical distance between students.
- Open windows to increase airflow in buses and other transportation, if possible.
- Regularly clean high touch surfaces on school buses at least daily.

5. **Handwashing/Hygiene**

   Schools are recommended to teach and reinforce frequent hand washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol may be used.

- Encourage students and staff to cough or sneeze into their elbow or tissue. Used tissues should be thrown in the trash and hand hygiene should be performed immediately.
- Maintain adequate supplies including soap, hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol, paper towels, tissues, and no touch trash cans.
- Hand hygiene should be encouraged throughout the school day:
  - Upon arrival at school
  - After going to the bathroom
  - Before leaving for the day
  - Before and after meals and snacks
  - After blowing nose, sneezing, or coughing into tissue
  - When hands are visibly soiled
- Assist/observe young children to ensure proper hand washing.

6. **Cleaning, Disinfection, and Airflow**
   - It is recommended that schools follow standard procedures for routine cleaning and disinfecting with an EPA-registered product for use against SARS-CoV-2. This means at least daily cleaning and disinfecting surfaces and objects that are touched often, such as desks, countertops, doorknobs, computer keyboards, hands-on learning items, faucet handles, phones, and toys.
   - If a person exhibits COVID-19 compatible symptoms or tests positive for COVID-19 within 24 hours of being in the school building, school staff should clean and disinfect the spaces occupied by the person. Once the area has been appropriately disinfected, it can be re-opened for use. Close off areas used by the person who is sick or positive and do not use those areas until after cleaning and disinfecting.
   - Wait as long as possible (at least several hours) after the person has exited a space before cleaning/disinfecting.
   - Open doors and windows and use fans or HVAC settings to increase air circulation in the area.
   - Use products from EPA List according to the instructions on the product label.
   - Wear a mask and gloves while cleaning and disinfecting.

Improving Airflow

Improve airflow to the extent possible to increase circulation of outdoor air, increase the delivery of clean air, and dilute potential contaminants. This can be achieved through several strategies:

- Bring in as much outdoor air as possible.
- If safe to do so, open windows and doors. Even just cracking open a window or door helps increase outdoor airflow, which helps reduce the potential concentration of virus particles in the air.
- Do not open windows or doors if doing so poses a safety or health risk.
- Use child-safe fans to increase the effectiveness of open windows.
- Safely secure fans in a window to blow potentially contaminated air out and pull new air in through other open windows and doors.
- Use fans to increase the effectiveness of open windows.
- Use exhaust fans in restrooms and kitchens.

7. **Response to Symptomatic Students and Staff**

   Schools are recommended to ensure procedures are in place to identify and respond to a student/staff member who becomes ill with COVID-19 symptoms. View Isolation Room Guidelines and the following recommended steps:
   - Designate an area away from others to isolate those who become ill with COVID-19 symptoms while at school.
   - Consider an area separate from the health office to be used for routine visits such as medication administration, injuries, and non-COVID-19 related visits.
   - Ensure there is enough space for multiple people placed at least 6 feet apart.
   - Ensure hygiene supplies is available, including additional cloth masks, tissues, and alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
   - Staff assigned to supervise students waiting to be picked up do not need to be healthcare personnel but should follow physical distancing guidelines.

For students with chronic health conditions, follow the students' specific individual medical care plan/emergency plan.

8. **Reporting Positive COVID-19 Cases in Schools**

   Schools can report aggregate counts for COVID-19 cases via the Health and Human Services Communication Portal (HHSCP) to fulfill communicable disease reporting requirements. Schools are recommended to submit all new cases of COVID-19 through the HHSCP on a weekly basis.

Isolation/Quarantine Guidelines

Recommendations regarding isolation and quarantine may change as conditions evolve – such changes could include the presence of a new variant that increases the risk to the public, or an increased number of cases that strains the healthcare system.

When schools are made aware of a positive case of COVID-19, schools are recommended to inform the positive case to isolate for 5 days after symptoms began and can return to school when fever-free for 24 hours without taking fever reducing medications and symptoms have improved.

View School Quarantine Recommendations document.

**OCHD may recommend stricter quarantine guidelines throughout the school year based on the level of community transmission and identified school outbreaks.*

SOURCES & LINKS

- How to Wear a Face Covering:
  https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/how-to-wear-cloth-face-coverings.html
- Handwashing:
  https://www.oakgov.com/covid/best-practices/prepare/Pages/hand-washing.aspx
- CDC COVID-19 Symptoms:
  https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/COVID19-symptoms.pdf
- Oakland County COVID-19 Data Dashboard:
  https://www.oakgov.com/covid/dashboard.html
- Test Methods
  https://www.oakgov.com/covid/resources/signschecklists/CV19%20Test%20Methods.pdf
- Vaccination Locations:
  https://oaklandcountyvaccine.com
- Mental Health & Community Resources:
  https://www.oakgov.com/covid/best-practices/resources/Pages/default.aspx

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