



LIVINGSTON COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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Published: 5/10/2021

Effective Date: 5/11/2021

Livingston County Health Department In-Person Education Quarantine Guidance Update

Contact tracing in educational settings remains a mandate outlined in the current Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) Epidemic Orders. The May 6, 2021 Gatherings and Face Mask Order (<https://bit.ly/2Rd1TOz>) issued by MDHHS states: *“Upon request, businesses, schools and other facilities must provide names and phone numbers of individuals with possible COVID-19 exposure to MDHHS and local health departments to aid in contact tracing and case investigation efforts.”*

Close contacts of confirmed or probable COVID-19 cases should be identified through contact tracing. Close contacts are defined as individuals who are within 6 feet of case for a cumulative time of 15 minutes or more^a.

As per Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and MDHHS guidelines, close contacts are asked to quarantine. However, for **students** exposed in a classroom or bus setting where 1) all individuals (case and close contacts) are wearing masks covering their nose and mouth and 2) infection control guidelines are being followed (as outlined in the MDHHS Return to School Toolkit), the following mitigation measures can be considered:

Students (who are close contacts) identified between 3 to 6 feet:

- Notify students of exposure and ask to monitor their health for 14 days from the date of exposure. If they feel ill or develop symptoms concerning for COVID-19, they should isolate at home and undergo COVID-19 testing.
- These students do not have to quarantine and can continue to attend school.

^a Those who have had COVID-19 within the past 3 months and those who are fully vaccinated (2 weeks after their last dose of a FDA approved COVID-19 vaccine) do not need to quarantine if they are exposed.



Students (who are close contacts) identified within 3 feet:

- These students should quarantine^a as per the Livingston County Health Department (LCHD) quarantine protocol.

These adapted mitigation measures DO NOT apply to exposures outside of the classroom or bus setting. Close contacts identified in all other settings (i.e. sports, extracurricular activities, households, etc.,) are asked to quarantine per LCHD quarantine protocol.

Additionally, these adapted mitigation measures DO NOT apply to staff identified as close contacts. The requirements of employees, including school employees, to isolate or quarantine under Public Act 339 of 2020 are not impacted by this change and remain in full effect pursuant to Michigan state law.

These adapted mitigation measures may be paused at the discretion of LCHD due to heightened public health concerns such as identification of variants of concern or identification of an outbreak.

Rationale

The COVID-19 pandemic is a once-in-a-century crisis. The SARS-CoV-2 virus, which causes COVID-19, is referred to as a “novel coronavirus” because it is new and scientists, physicians, and public health experts are continually learning about it. As we learn more through studies and real-world epidemiologic evidence, we can adjust the public health mitigation strategies designed to control the pandemic.

The definition of a close contact is a standard definition that has been used for other diseases caused by coronaviruses such as SARS and MERS. The mitigation measures (i.e. quarantine and self-monitoring) associated with close contacts are also standard practices. Based on growing epidemiologic state and national studies as well as data from Livingston County, secondary attack rates in the classroom setting are lower than in other settings and allow for additional flexibility in establishing mitigation measures. While adapted mitigation measures carry more risk of allowing transmission than standard measures, these risks must be weighed against risks from increased quarantine periods.

^a Those who have had COVID-19 within the past 3 months and those who are fully vaccinated (2 weeks after their last dose of a FDA approved COVID-19 vaccine) do not need to quarantine if they are exposed.



The CDC Science Brief: Transmission of SARS-CoV-2 in K-12 schools (<https://bit.ly/3y4O3yo>), updated 3/19/21, outlines the evidence of physical distancing and states: “*However, emerging international and U.S. evidence suggests layering of other prevention strategies is effective at reducing SARS-COV-2 transmission risk even with physical distances of less than 6 feet between students in classrooms.*”¹ Studies from the United States and abroad that are cited in this brief indicate low secondary attack rates. For example, an analysis from K-6 schools in Utah showed a secondary attack rates of 0.7% in schools with students distanced less than 6 feet who were wearing masks. Analyses from the Massachusetts Department of Education found no statistically significant differences in secondary attack rates in schools that used 3 feet vs 6 feet physical distancing². Ohio Schools COVID-19 Evaluation Research team evaluated the secondary attack rates of close contacts versus a similar control group of non-exposed students and found similar attack rates (2.9% vs 3.5%)³. Locally, 3 vs. 6 feet distancing has not been evaluated, but the Livingston County Health Department has found evidence that student-to-student in-class transmission over the course of the school year has been limited despite in-person instruction (data not shown). Given the growing evidence of limited in-class transmission and low risk of transmission even with distances less than 6 feet in K-12 schools, it is reasonable to implement different mitigation measures for students (who are close contacts) distanced within 3 feet versus 3-6 feet in the classroom setting where masks are universally worn and rigorous infection control plans have been implemented.

References

1. CDC. Science Brief: Transmission of SARS-CoV-2 in K-12 schools [Internet]. CDC; 2021 [cited 2021 May 9]. Available from: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/science/science-briefs/transmission_k_12_schools.html
2. van den Berg P, Schechter-Perkins EM, Jack RS, et al. Effectiveness of three versus six feet of physical distancing for controlling spread of COVID-19 among primary and secondary students and staff: A retrospective, state-wide cohort study. Clin Infect Dis [Internet] 2021; Available from: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/cid/ciab230>
3. The Ohio Schools COVID-19 Evaluation Research Team. Ohio Schools COVID-19 Evaluation: Final Report [Internet]. Available from: https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/static/responsible/schools/OSCE_evaluation.pdf

