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August 19, 2021

Health Department of Northwest Michigan COVID-19 Update

Health department releases updated toolkit to help schools prepare for 2021-2022 school year

The Health Department of Northwest Michigan released an updated [COVID-19 School Toolkit](#) today to help school districts prepare for the 2021-2022 school year. Among other things, the toolkit provides background information on COVID-19, how it is spread, includes screening tools for students and staff, and provides tips for managing the virus in the school and community with a goal to keep the risk low and keep schools and school activities as safe as possible.

“Schools, working together with local health departments and the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS), have an important role in slowing the spread of COVID-19 to help ensure students have safe and healthy learning environments,” said Lisa Peacock, Health Officer. “When educational and childcare settings carefully coordinate, plan and prepare, cases of COVID-19 may still occur within the community and schools. Proper preparation can help the entire school community be prepared for when a case, or multiple cases, are identified,” she noted.

Schools will need to “dial up or dial down” their mitigation measures - wearing a mask indoors, washing hands, maintaining distance, and enhancing ventilation - as the risk of transmission fluctuates. A layered protection strategy should be followed to ensure a healthy environment, allowing all residents the best chance to remain healthy and physically present at work and in the classroom setting. Due to the rising number of COVID-19 cases – largely due to the Delta variant – the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently changed its mask wearing and testing recommendations. The CDC now recommends:

- Anyone who is exposed as close contact, regardless of vaccination status, be tested 3-5 days after exposure. To locate testing information, visit the [Michigan COVID-19 Test Finder](#) website, or call the health department at 800-432-4121.
- All students and adults in K-12 schools wear a mask indoors, regardless of vaccination status.
- All people in areas where transmission levels are substantial or high wear a mask when indoors, regardless of vaccination status.

“We need a high number of people vaccinated in order to drive down COVID-19 transmission. If this virus can find a vulnerable host, it will move from person-to-person, mutate and continue to spread,” Peacock said. “Getting vaccinated is the answer to stopping this virus and keeping our children in schools, our businesses open, and our community healthy.”

Although COVID-19 outbreaks have occurred in school settings, [data from multiple studies](#) has shown that transmission rates within school settings, when multiple prevention and mitigation strategies are in

The Health Department of Northwest Michigan is mandated by the Michigan Public Health Code to promote wellness, prevent disease, provide quality healthcare, address health problems of vulnerable populations, and protect the environment for the residents and visitors of Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet, and Otsego counties. For more information, visit nwhealth.org.

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place, are typically lower than or similar to community transmission levels. “The main goal of mitigation measures is to protect students, teachers and staff, in order to maintain in-person learning for the school year,” Peacock said. “We are providing school officials with this toolkit to help them take precautionary measures to mitigate risk and prepare for and manage any cases that do occur. Our ultimate goal is to provide schools with the tools they need to maintain in-person learning for the 2021-2022 school year,” she added.

One way parents, community members, and staff can help schools maintain in-person learning is to keep students and staff with [symptoms](#) home. “We urge staff and parents of students who are sick with even mild symptoms to stay home in order to keep our schools in person,” Peacock added. The toolkit encourages parents/families to screen for symptoms before their child leaves for school, provides information for families and school staff on best practices to consider to prevent cases and outbreaks within the school population, and how to be prepared for symptomatic or positive staff and students.

Vaccination is our most powerful tool. The health department offers convenient COVID-19 vaccination clinics for all area residents and visitors 12 and older either by appointment ahead of time or simply walking in. Parent consent is required for minors. Anyone may call 800-432-4121 if they have questions or are not able to find a time or date that works for them and/or their child. Clinics offer client choice of Pfizer, Moderna or J&J unless otherwise noted. Upcoming clinics for walk-ins or appointments include:

Sunday, August 22

- 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. - Legs Inn, 6425 N. Lake Shore Dr., Cross Village. Vaccine: Pfizer and J&J. To schedule and appointment: [Click Here](#)

Tuesday, August 24

- 1-4:30 p.m. - Health Department of Northwest Michigan, 209 Portage Dr., Bellaire. Vaccine: Pfizer, Moderna and J&J. To schedule an appointment: [Click Here.](#)

Wednesday, August 25

- 8:15-11:35 a.m. - Health Department of Northwest Michigan, 95 Livingston Blvd., Gaylord. Vaccine: Pfizer, Moderna and J&J. To schedule an appointment: [Click Here.](#)
- 1-4:30.m. - Health Department of Northwest Michigan, 220 W. Garfield Ave., Charlevoix. Vaccine: Pfizer, Moderna and J&J. To schedule an appointment:[Click Here](#)

Friday, August 27

- 1-4:30 p.m. - Health Department of Northwest Michigan, 3434 M-119, Harbor Springs. Vaccine: Pfizer and J&J. To schedule an appointment:[Click Here](#)

The calendar on the website www.nwhealth.org lists clinics currently scheduled through September 29.

Stay up to date on the latest information in the Health Department of Northwest Michigan jurisdiction by [liking and following our Facebook page](#) and visiting our [COVID-19 Data Dashboard](#). To locate a testing facility, visit the [Michigan COVID-19 Test Finder website](#). To track the risk levels of COVID-19 pandemic indicators, visit the [MI Safe Start Map website](#). For more information regarding the COVID-19 vaccine, visit the MDHHS [vaccine website](#) or the [CDC vaccine website](#).