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Health Department of Northwest Michigan COVID-19 Update

Health Department amends K-12 mask order

Effective Tuesday, Nov. 9, the Health Department of Northwest Michigan released the First Amended Order to update and amend requirements from the original K-12 School Masking Order.

In response to feedback and questions raised during ongoing regular meetings between school leadership and health department officials, certain amendments were made. The majority of the Original Order, issued August 27 requiring universal masking in grades K-12 within the four-county jurisdiction of Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet and Otsego counties, is still in place. Modifications fall into three main areas:

1. The amended order exempts students and officials/referees while actively engaged in sports practice or competition and performing arts practice and performance from wearing a mask if they participate in a testing program described in the Health Department of Northwest Michigan Athletics and Performing Arts Guidance where wearing of a mask would be unsafe or interfere with the ability to perform.
2. The amended order provides a clearer definition of an appropriate face mask or facial covering.
3. The amended order exempts residential schools from the order if they are operating under a written mitigation plan approved by the Health Officer.

Health Officer Lisa Peacock and Medical Director Dr. Josh Meyerson released the amended orders after several consultations with school superintendents and other leaders and following communications with Board of Health members.

“After studying pertinent data and consulting with school superintendents, the amendments were made to reflect case counts, transmission rates, and changes made to the Michigan High School Athletics Association COVID-19 guidelines,” Peacock and Dr. Meyerson stated. “The Order as amended allows students to safely participate in athletics and performing arts,” they added.

Health officials continue to monitor disease trends and the availability of a vaccine for all school-aged children as they plan a path forward to support schools not only with guidance involving COVID-19 transmission, but any other communicable disease.

To schedule an appointment exclusively for children 5 to 11 years old, [click here](#). To schedule an appointment for anyone 12 and older, [click here](#). A parent/guardian must accompany anyone younger than 18 to a COVID-19 clinic. Please bring an insurance card to the appointment. 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.

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.

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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