



BERRIEN COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

better health. stronger communities.

May 12, 2021

Dear Berrien County School Leaders,

The Berrien County Health Department (BCHD) has been committed to partnership with the county's schools with the mutual goal of making in-person learning possible for as many students as possible throughout the 2020-21 school year. Your leadership has been essential in making Berrien County schools leaders in the state and placing our county at the top for the number of in-person learning days for our youth this year.

Pursuant to your request for additional guidance and clarification regarding quarantines for school-based COVID-19 exposures, the BCHD has listed our strong recommendations below. They are in close alignment with the guidance you all have been working under for the duration of the school year and have contributed to the success you've had in keeping our schools open for in-person learning.

BCHD strongly recommends that schools continue the use of a 10-day quarantine for those with close contact to a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19. The exclusion of people who may transmit COVID-19 has been an important preventive measure that has contributed to the very low transmission rates seen in schools.

The Berrien County Health Department (BCHD) continues to recommend the use of a 10-day quarantine for those exposed to COVID-19, with a revised definition of close contact within the classroom setting. In implementation, a student's quarantine can end after Day 10 without testing and if no symptoms have been reported during daily monitoring. Contacts should continue to monitor themselves for symptoms for 4 additional days after their quarantine period.

BCHD will use the following definitions for what constitutes a close contact (exposure):

- **A close contact (student) in the classroom** is now defined as someone who spends 15 minutes or more within three feet of a person with COVID-19 for 15 minutes accumulated time over a period of 24 hours as long as masks and other mitigation measures are in place. *The World Health Organization, American Academy of Pediatrics, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend at least 3 feet of physical distance between students in classrooms as an option for schools provided it is layered with other prevention measures.*
- **A close contact whenever masks cannot be used** (for example, while eating) is defined as someone who spends 15 minutes or more within six feet of a person with COVID-19 for 15 minutes accumulated time over a period of 24 hours. *Greater physical distance (at least 6 feet) should be prioritized whenever masks cannot be used.*
- **A close contact outside of the classroom, during sports and other extracurricular activities** is defined as someone who spends 15 minutes or more within six feet of a person with COVID-19 for 15 minutes accumulated time over a period of 24 hours. Strategies to control COVID-19 transmission in schools should take the role of sports and other extracurricular activities into account, as well as differences in transmission dynamics for these activities compared with in-person instruction.

- **Adult close contacts** are defined as an employee or other adult who spends 15 minutes or more within six feet of a person with COVID-19 for 15 minutes accumulated time over a period of 24 hours.

According to the MDHHS May 6, 2021 Gatherings and Face Mask Epidemic Order, "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." Schools should continue to follow the process of sharing contacts with the Berrien County Health Department that has been observed throughout the 2020-21 school year.

If a person has been fully vaccinated (2 weeks after their second dose in a 2-dose series, such as Pfizer or Moderna vaccines, or 2 weeks after a single-dose vaccine, such as Johnson & Johnson's Janssen vaccine) they do not need to quarantine after exposure to someone who has COVID-19 or get tested unless they have symptoms.

With less than four weeks left in the school year, we are in the home stretch of an unprecedented period of time for our educational organizations and partners. We are grateful for your bold leadership and willingness to make difficult decisions that have resulted in more in-person education days than any of us thought possible at the onset of the school year.

In partnership,



Nicki Britten, MPH
Health Officer



Dr. Rick Johansen, MD, MPH
Medical Director