



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: September 2, 2021

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Deputy Health Officer

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RE: Genesee County Health Department Updated Mask Order: Pre-Kindergarten through Grade Twelve

The Genesee County Health Department (GCHD) has updated the initial mask order released on August 12, 2021 to include Pre-Kindergarten and grades seven (7) through twelve (12). This order adding Pre-Kindergarten and grades seven (7) through twelve (12) is effective Tuesday, September 7, 2021.

The order will remain in effect until community transmission for Genesee County is categorized as “Moderate” by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Transmission Indicator for New Cases for at least fourteen (14) consecutive days. Genesee County, according to data as of August 31, 2021 is listed as “High” transmission, with 178.9 weekly cases per 100,000. “Moderate” transmission is weekly cases per 100,000 ranging from 10 to 49. Genesee County case data for the CDC Transmission Indicator for New Cases is available at <https://www.mistartmap.info/cdc-indicators?area=county%3Agenesee>.

The full order is available starting on the second page of this document and on the Genesee County Health Department website at <https://www.gchd.us/coronavirus/>.

GENESEE COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

September 2, 2021

Orders Regarding Prevention of COVID-19 Transmission in Educational Settings within Genesee County, Michigan

The Medical Health Officer of Genesee County Health Department makes the following factual determinations and issues this Order pursuant to the Michigan Public Health Code, MCL 333.2451 and 333.2453, 333.2465, as well as R. 325.175(4), which is an administrative rule promulgated by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services pursuant to MCL 333.2226(d). Factual findings include:

1. The principal mode by which people are infected with SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19) is through exposure to respiratory fluids carrying infectious virus. Exposure occurs in two main ways: (1) inhalation of very fine respiratory droplets and aerosol particles, and (2) deposition of respiratory droplets and particles on exposed mucous membranes in the mouth, nose, or eye by direct splashes and sprays.
2. People release respiratory fluids during exhalation (e.g., quiet breathing, speaking, singing, exercise, coughing, sneezing) in the form of droplets across a spectrum of sizes. These droplets carry virus and transmit infection.
3. The risk of SARS-CoV-2 infection varies according to the amount of virus to which a person is exposed and the transmissibility of a particular variant. Once infectious droplets and particles are exhaled, they move outward from the source. The risk for infection decreases with increasing distance from the source and increasing time after exhalation.
4. The Delta variant of the SARS-CoV-2 virus is the dominant variant in Michigan and is significantly more contagious than the original form that entered the United States in the winter of 2020.
5. COVID-19 infections are increasing among children in the United States, with over 204,000 cases this past week (8/19/21-8/26/21), according to a report from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). Since the pandemic began, children represented 14.8% of total cumulated cases. For the week ending August 26, children were 22.4% of reported weekly COVID-19 cases.
6. Two main factors determine the amount of virus to which a person is exposed in the air or by touching a surface contaminated by virus:
 - a. Decreasing the amount of virus in the air
 - b. Progressive loss of viral viability and infectiousness over time influenced by environmental factors such as temperature, humidity, and ultraviolet radiation (e.g., sunlight).
7. Transmission of SARS-CoV-2 from inhalation of virus in the air farther than six feet from an infectious source can occur. Although infections through inhalation at distances greater than six feet from an infectious source are less likely than at closer distances, these transmission events have involved the presence of an infectious person exhaling virus indoors for an extended time (more than 15 minutes and in some cases hours) leading to virus concentrations in the air space sufficient to transmit infections to people more than 6 feet away.

8. Studies of COVID-19 incidence in school districts during the 2020-2021 school year demonstrate that proper masking is the most effective mitigation strategy to prevent secondary transmission in schools when COVID-19 is circulating and when vaccination is unavailable, or there is insufficient uptake of vaccination.
9. Masks are primarily intended to reduce the emission of virus-laden droplets (“source control”), which is especially relevant for asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic infected wearers who feel well and may be unaware of their infectiousness to others, and who are estimated to account for more than 50% of transmissions.
10. The most effective way to prevent transmission in schools is through achieving high levels of COVID-19 vaccination among eligible students, as well as teachers, staff, and household members.
11. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS), the universal use of masks in schools is a safe, essential, and proven strategy to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in schools.
12. When multiple prevention strategies are applied consistently, including ensuring ventilation for increased air exchange within a setting, proper and frequent hand-washing, and consistent and proper mask use, school-associated transmission of COVID-19 is reduced.

THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that all Educational Institutions and all Persons in Educational Settings must adhere to the following rules:

1. The Educational Institutions shall ensure that people in pre-kindergarten through grade twelve consistently and properly wear a facial covering while inside any enclosed building or structure of the institution.
2. The Educational Institutions shall ensure that all persons, regardless of vaccination status, providing service to any persons in pre-kindergarten through grade twelve properly and consistently wear a facial covering while inside any enclosed building or structure of the institution.
3. Timely communication from schools to parents, guardians, students, teachers, staff, and other persons affiliated with schools promotes awareness of how COVID-19 is affecting and being addressed within schools. While MDHHS Epidemic Order dated October 6, “Reporting of Confirmed and Probable Cases of COVID-19 at Schools” remains in effect, and requires Public Notice of new and cumulative counts of School Associated Case(s) of COVID-19. This order specifically expands on that, and includes the requirement for public notice of Total Positive Cases, Current Positive Cases, Probable Cases, Total Quarantined, Currently Quarantined and persons Cleared to Return.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the following terms shall have the following definitions for purposes of this ORDER:

1. "Educational Institutions" or "Educational Settings" includes public, charter or private youth camps, youth programs, childcare centers, tutoring centers, preschools, primary through secondary schools, vocational schools, colleges, and universities and other organized activities outside the home where coursework is taught. Specifically, this includes indoor corridors and cafeterias except when a child is seated at a table or desk and is eating or drinking.
2. "Fully vaccinated persons" means persons for whom at least two weeks has passed after receiving the final dose of an FDA-approved or authorized COVID-19 vaccine.
3. "[Persons in Educational Settings](#)" means students, teachers, administrative staff, parents or other relatives or guests of children while inside the educational institution, attendees, volunteers, and other employees or volunteers of Educational Institutions.

FURTHERMORE, this ORDER shall not apply to the following Persons:

1. Persons seated at a table or desk while eating or drinking.
2. Persons outside if not engaged in activities involving direct physical contact.
3. Persons under the age of four years, although supervised masking is encouraged for children who are at least two years old.
4. Vaccinated teachers who are working with children who are hard of hearing or students with developmental conditions who benefit from facial cues.
5. Persons with developmental conditions of any age attending school for whom it has been demonstrated that the use of a face covering would inhibit the person's access to education. These are limited to persons with:
 - a. An Individualized Education Plan or Section 504 Plan **AND**
 - b. That would benefit from facial cues and use of a clear face mask is not possible.

Both conditions 1 and 2 must be met. Parental signature alone will not suffice.

6. Persons who have a current qualifying medical reason confirmed in writing from a Medical Doctor (MD) or Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (DO) with active license to practice medicine in the State of Michigan.

IT IS FURTHER REMINDED that:

1. On January 29, 2021, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued an ORDER that required face masks to be worn by all people while on public transportation (which included all passengers and all personnel operating conveyances) traveling into, within, or out of the United States and U.S. territories. This CDC FEDERAL ORDER includes school buses, both public and private.

2. On July 27, 2021, the CDC issued recommendations calling for universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors to schools, regardless of vaccination status. On August 13, 2021, MDHHS issued updated guidance stating that all schools should require universal indoor masking.
3. This order does not repeat, supersede, or rely on any current MDHHS or Federal Epidemic Orders, but as long as such orders remain in effect, they are incorporated by reference herein.

THIS ORDER is effective on Tuesday September 7, 2021 and remains in effect until community transmission for Genesee County is categorized as “Moderate” by the CDC for at least fourteen consecutive days, or until further notice from the Genesee County Medical Health Officer.

Dated: September 2, 2021

Pamela B. Hackert, M.D., J.D., M.P.H.
Medical Health Officer
Genesee County Health Department

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