OAKLAND COUNTY MICHIGAN
HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

OAKLAND COUNTY EXECUTIVE DAVID COULTER

Leigh-Anne Stafford, Director
(248) 858-1293 | staffordl@oakgov.com

Dear School Leaders,

Attached you will find Oakland County Health Division's (OCHD) 'Back to School Guidance: COVID-19 Prevention in Schools' for the 2021-2022 school year. This guidance document is also accompanied by decision-making tools such as flow charts, quarantine recommendations, and information about close contacts.

OCHD recognizes the importance of returning to in-person instruction while protecting the health and safety of our students, school staff, and broader community from COVID-19. OCHD's guidance is designed to support all public and private K-12 schools to identify layered prevention strategies and minimize disruption to in-person learning. The guidance aligns with both the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS).

Some key points in the guidance are:

- Universal masking is strongly recommended (not optional) while indoors at all school facilities and events for students, teachers, staff and all school visitors regardless of vaccination status. Masks are required for students and staff when riding the school bus or any school-sponsored transportation system.
- In a K-12 indoor classroom setting where all students are wearing masks and additional prevention strategies are in place, students who are 3-feet or greater from a student who tested positive will be exempt from quarantine.

Recommendations in the school guidance are based on the latest data. When new data emerges, it may drive new and modified guidance. When the CDC revised its guidance regarding masking in May, the Delta variant represented 1% of all cases. Today that number exceeds 90%. This variant is known to be more transmissible, and many school-aged children remain unvaccinated and are at risk for COVID-19 infection and associated complications. In addition, it has been demonstrated that the implementation of layered preventive measures can minimize disruption from isolation and quarantine and maximize in-person learning that is critical to the future health of our children. Outside of vaccinations, universal masking is our best defense in transmitting the COVID-19 virus, therefore **we strongly recommend that Oakland County schools follow the current CDC and MDHHS guidance with universal masking for students and staff in all school facilities**.

As the year progresses, we will observe the impact of bringing together large numbers of both vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals in the school setting and continue to monitor levels of community transmission. OCHD will be here to assist you in "dialing up" or "dialing down" these preventive strategies to keep your students and staff safe. We hope that the current trend in cases is temporary and that vaccination rates will rise to a level that is more protective of the community.

Staying up to date on vaccinations helps keep children, families, and communities safe from potential outbreaks of serious diseases. School is an environment where contagious diseases can spread quickly. Vaccination is the best tool we have to protect against serious illness and death which are preventable.

We value your partnership and are seeking your help to encourage Back to School immunizations, including the COVID-19 vaccine for those eligible. Now, more than ever, it is essential to protect our most vulnerable – our youth and those who are unable to get vaccinated for medical reasons – as we are seeing an increase in COVID-19 cases with the spread of the highly contagious Delta variant.

We are seeking partners to host vaccination clinics. If you are interested, please contact our office at 248-858-4902.

In addition to these resources, our social media channels frequently post about a variety of public health topics, including upcoming vaccination opportunities. Please follow us on Facebook and Twitter @PublicHealthOC and share our posts with your school community.

Our partnership is so valuable, and we all play a role in ensuring that students, teachers, and school staff experience a safe and healthy school year. The Health Division is here to discuss your concerns, answer questions, and support you by providing updated information and guidance as we continue to navigate COVID-19 together.

We appreciate your help with this important effort and look forward to a safe and productive school year. Please contact us with any questions.

Sincerely,

OAKLAND COUNTY HEALTH DIVISION
Department of Health and Human Services

Leigh-Anne Stafford

Leigh-Anne Stafford
Director, Health & Human Services