

ALLEGAN COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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MEMORANDUM

Date: February 28, 2022

To: Allegan County School Superintendents and Board of Education Members

From: Angelique Joynes, Health Officer and Dr. Richard Tooker, Medical Director

Subject: COVID-19 Exposure Letters, Mask Requirement Updates

Starting Tuesday, March 1, 2022, the Allegan County Health Department (ACHD) will be moving from quarantine letters to potential exposure letters for COVID-19, similar to other communicable disease letters. This decision comes as current case rates and hospitalizations, and increased access to vaccines, testing and therapies indicate that Allegan County is in a "[post-surge recovery](#)" phase in this pandemic. ACHD is focusing on minimizing severe disease, limiting strain on the healthcare system, and enabling those at highest risk to protect themselves against infection and severe disease.

On February 25, 2022, CDC released a new framework to monitor the level of COVID-19 in communities that includes hospitalizations, hospital capacity, and cases.

- This new approach focuses on preventing hospitals and healthcare system from being overwhelmed and directing prevention efforts toward protecting people at high risk for severe illness.
- The COVID-19 Community Level will inform CDC recommendations on prevention measures, like masking and testing.
- With this new framework, CDC no longer recommends universal indoor mask wearing in K-12 and early education/child care programs in [areas with a low or medium COVID-19 Community Level](#). **CDC is also not requiring that people [wear masks on buses](#) or vans operated by public or private school systems, including early care and education/child care programs in this [updated guidance](#).**
- As of February 24, Allegan County is in a low COVID-19 Community Level.

Potential exposure letters will be given to individuals based on classroom lists provided from schools. **Quarantine might be required if there is an identified outbreak or ongoing spread in the facility, despite low Community Level conditions.** Recommendations regarding masking and quarantine may change as conditions evolve or Allegan County moves to a high Community Level, based on the new CDC framework. During future times of surge, additional access to testing resources, vaccination clinics, and therapeutic treatment may be made available as the situation warrants.

Given our low Community level, ACHD recommends people stay up to date with their vaccines and take a test and stay home if they are sick. Schools should continue to ensure increased ventilation. ACHD recommends that all individuals, regardless of vaccination status, should wear a mask during isolation and quarantine periods. [Making personal decisions](#) about mask use in certain settings is an important tool in mitigating the spread of COVID-19. Individuals, who feel sick, may be at high risk of infection, or who feel better protected when masked should choose to wear a mask to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

Although we continue to feel optimistic about the current conditions in our County, please remember that COVID-19 is still present, is unpredictable and will be part of our lives for a while, perhaps even indefinitely. Additional surges are possible; please be prepared to take measures in the future to protect yourself, your loved ones, and your community.