



Public Health
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**Tuscarawas County
Health Department**

August 11, 2021

Tuscarawas County COVID-19 Guidance for School Boards, Educators/ Staff Parents/Guardians and Students

The Tuscarawas County Health Department fully supports the return to in-person instruction for the 2021-2022 school year and understands the importance of this priority. This document was created to be used as a tool for school administrators, educators/staff, parents/guardians and students for current COVID-19 requirements and recommendations. **Our hope is that this document will provide the most up to date and accurate information for school districts to set appropriate policies and for parents and guardians to make the best health choices for their families.**

The Tuscarawas County Health Department has created this document based on the information and requirements set forth by the State of Ohio, the Ohio Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The Tuscarawas County Health Department will not be imposing or enforcing any local orders or mandates as it relates to COVID-19. All recommendations from our department will mirror those set forth in the sources outlined at the end of this document.

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Key Takeaways

- Students benefit from in person learning.
- **The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends** that masks should be worn in all indoor locations, including school buildings for all unvaccinated individuals (over the age of 2).
- **The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends** that vaccinated persons consider wearing a mask indoors if they are in an area of substantial or high transmission.
- **The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends** that schools maintain at least 3 feet of physical distance between students in classrooms.
- Vaccination is currently the leading public health strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic.

I. **Prevention Strategies in School Settings – What is Required and What is Recommended**

a. **Vaccination (Recommended by the CDC)**

It is currently known that people who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 are at low risk of severe infection and less likely to transmit COVID-19 to others.

Individuals 12 and older are now eligible for vaccination. Schools are encouraged to provide and promote factual and up to date information on COVID-19 vaccines to families so that informed decisions can be made.

Fully vaccinated = 2 weeks after an individual’s second dose in a 2-dose series OR 2 weeks after a single dose vaccine

b. **Mask use (Recommended by CDC)**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) currently recommends that people who are not fully vaccinated wear masks when indoors. Children under 2 years of age should not wear masks. Generally speaking, people do not need to wear masks when outdoors, however people who are not vaccinated should wear masks when in crowded outdoor settings or when there will be long periods of close contact with other people who are not fully vaccinated.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that vaccinated persons consider wearing a mask indoors if you are in an area of substantial or high transmission.

School administrators may opt to require mask use in the schools for the following reasons:

- Having a student population that is not yet eligible for vaccinations based on age
- High levels of community transmission of COVID-19
- COVID-19 outbreak identified in the school system

Exceptions to universal masks policies should still be afforded to individuals who cannot wear a mask or safely wear a mask because of an ADA disability or if wearing a mask would create a workplace safety risk.

However, given new evidence on the B.1.617.2 (Delta) variant, CDC has updated the guidance for fully vaccinated people. CDC recommends universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors to K-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status.

c. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Universal Requirement for Mask Use on Public Transportation, including School Buses (Required by the CDC)

There is currently a CDC order in place that requires masks to be worn by all persons, regardless of vaccination status, on all public transportation including school buses. Regardless of the school's mask policy all passengers and drivers must wear a mask when on a school buses or other school forms of transportation. Schools should provide masks to students who do not have them, forgot to bring them, or whose family cannot afford them.

It is the responsibility of each school district to enforce this **CDC order**.

d. Physical Distancing (Recommended by CDC)

In general, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends that unvaccinated individuals keep a distance of at least 6 feet from others not in their household. However, based on studies from 2020-2021 school year, CDC recommends at least a 3-foot distance between students in classroom settings.

e. Ventilation (Recommended by CDC)

The following strategies are recommended, when possible, to reduce viral particles in the air:

- During transportation, crack or open windows in school buses or other school forms of transportation
- If safe, open school building doors and windows to promote fresh air flow
- Utilize child safe fans in classrooms
- Ensure HVAC or air filtration systems are in good working order

f. Cleaning (Recommended by CDC)

Once daily cleaning should be sufficient to remove viruses on surfaces.

Disinfecting (utilizing an EPA approved disinfectant) removes germs which may further prevent virus spread. If a facility has someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 24 hours, schools should clean AND disinfect the space.

II. School Visitors

It is recommended that schools have set policies for school visitors and post them clearly. It is **recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)** that nonessential visitors be limited, and it should be emphasized to all visitors who may be sick to stay home. Masks should be recommended for unvaccinated persons.

III. School Meals

The following strategies are recommended to reduce virus transmission:

- Maximize physical distance as much as possible when moving through food service lines.
- Clean frequently touched surfaces.
- Promote hand washing.
- Improve ventilation.

Note: There is no need to limit food service approaches to single use items or packaged meals. Students, teachers, and staff who are fully vaccinated do not need to distance while eating.

IV. Recess

Masks do not need to be worn when outdoors. When recess is held indoors, **the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends** those who are unvaccinated wear masks.

V. Sports and other Extracurricular Activities

The Tuscarawas County Health Department recognizes the importance of school sponsored sports and extracurricular activities. It is encouraged that these activities continue with the following considerations:

- Generally, COVID-19 transmission is lower when playing outdoors rather than indoor settings.
- COVID-19 transmission is more likely to occur in sports that require close contact such as wrestling, football, and basketball.
- The risk of COVID-19 transmission increases with the number of athletes, coaches, and spectators. Transmission also increases with the intensity of the sport.

The Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA) “urges the membership to continue to follow safe protocols to protect everyone, especially those individuals who are not fully vaccinated. There are currently no mandates regarding vaccinations and social distancing, and the only mandate on masks is the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) requirement that masks be worn while using public transportation, which includes school busses. It is highly recommended that coaches and student-athletes who are eligible for vaccinations to be vaccinated and it is highly recommended that those who are unvaccinated maintain social distancing and wear masks in indoor facilities and in outdoor facilities where there are crowded situations.”

The Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA) further encourages student-athletes who test positive for COVID-19 to gain medical clearance before they return to practices or contests. Schools should consider having a medical release form kept on file for these individuals.

VI. Isolation for COVID-19 Cases

Individuals with probable or confirmed COVID-19 will be advised by the Health Department to self-isolate immediately, if they are not doing so already. Self-isolation is required for people with probable or confirmed COVID-19 who have mild illness and are able to recover at home. Such individuals should not hesitate to seek medical treatment if symptoms progress.

At home, anyone sick or infected should separate from others, stay in a specific “sick room” or area, and use a separate bathroom (if available).

This mandatory isolation is allowed under section 3707.08 of the Ohio Revised Code.

A person will be released from isolation by the Health Department.

- **Positive case with symptoms will be released from isolation after:**
 - 10 days since symptoms first appeared **and**
 - 24 hours with no fever without the use of fever-reducing medications **and**
 - Other symptoms of COVID-19 are improving*

*Loss of taste and smell may persist for weeks or months after recovery and need not delay the end of isolation.

Note that these recommendations do not apply to people with severe COVID-19 or with weakened immune systems (immunocompromised). People who are severely ill with COVID-19 might need to stay home longer than 10 days and up to 20 days after symptoms first appeared. People with weakened immune systems may require testing to determine when they can be around others.

- **Positive case with no symptoms will be released from isolation after:**
 - 10 days have passed since a positive viral test for COVID-19

VII. Quarantine for COVID-19 Exposures

A close contact is someone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for a total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period starting from 2 days before they have symptoms or 2 days prior to test for asymptomatic persons.

Exception: In the K–12 indoor classroom setting, the close contact definition excludes students who were within 3 to 6 feet of an infected student (laboratory-confirmed or a

clinically compatible illness) if both the infected student and the exposed student(s) correctly and consistently wore well-fitting masks the entire time.

This exception does not apply to teachers, staff, or other adults in the indoor classroom setting.

Close contacts who have had a recent exposure do not need to quarantine if they have been fully vaccinated, and not experiencing symptoms, OR they were diagnosed with COVID-19 in the last 3 months.

School districts should have policies in place to determine quarantine lengths for students, staff and teachers. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends a 14-day quarantine from time of exposure. However, reduced quarantine may be accepted, if allowed by school policy, to 10 days without testing or 7 days after receiving a negative PCR or proctored rapid antigen test on day 5 or after.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) now recommends that individuals be tested 3-5 days after a known exposure, regardless of vaccination status.

Note: If the positive case resides in the home and is unable to completely separate from the rest of the household members for the full duration of the isolation period then the quarantine period for the household members is during the case's isolation period plus the 14, 10 or 7 day additional time.

VIII. School Reporting Requirements

The State of Ohio is still requiring the reporting of school district case numbers. These numbers must be reported to the Tuscarawas County Health Department by 4pm Monday on a weekly basis by emailing the following information to eoc@tchdnow.org

- New student cases for that reporting week
- Total student cases
- New staff cases for that reporting week
- Total staff cases

The Health Department will continue to report case numbers for all districts to the State on a weekly basis. These numbers are then reported by the Ohio Department of Health for public information.

IX. The Health Department's Role vs School District's Role

Per the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) K-12 schools should collaborate with local health departments when investigating people who have been diagnosed or exposed to COVID-19. As soon as possible after our Health Department has been notified that someone in the K-12 school has been diagnosed with COVID-19 we will confirm the diagnosis with the designated school official. School officials should then work to identify and notify close contacts, or families of close contacts of

exposure and notify them of the school's policy on quarantine length and return to school requirements.

The Health Department is responsible for notification to the school district of students, staff or family members who have been quarantined due to an out of school COVID-19 exposure.

X. Ohio House Bill 244

On October 13, 2021 Ohio House Bill (HB) 244 will formally take effect. HB 244 prohibits public schools and universities from requiring vaccines authorized for "emergency use" by the FDA; and prohibits public schools and universities from discriminating against individuals who have not received such vaccine, including a prohibition against excluding such unvaccinated individuals from activities offered to vaccinated individuals.

This means that schools cannot require things such as facial coverings for unvaccinated persons only after October 13, 2021, unless full FDA approval is granted for such vaccines. Currently, legal experts have not yet opined on whether this Bill includes issuance of quarantine orders. Should it be determined that it does, schools would be forced to include vaccinated persons who are exposed in school settings in their quarantine list. The Health Department will be providing more information on this as it becomes available.

TCHD will continue to share the most up to date information regarding COVID-19 at www.tchdnow.org/COVID-19 and [www. https://www.facebook.com/tchdnow](https://www.facebook.com/tchdnow). The Health Department also sends out weekly COVID-19 newsletters via email every Friday evening. To subscribe to that weekly email please contact eoc@tchdnow.org and ask to be added to the COVID-19 newsletter distribution list.

Continue to monitor the below sources for the most up to date information.

Sources:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/contact-tracing.html>

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/quarantine.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fif-you-are-sick%2Fisolation.html

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/quarantine.html>

Ohio High School Athletic Association

<https://ohsaaweb.blob.core.windows.net/files/BulletinBoard/20210727AdministratorUpdate.pdf>

Ohio House Bill 244

<https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA134-HB-244>

Ohio Revised Code

<https://codes.ohio.gov/ohio-revised-code/section-3707.08>