

## STATE OF MICHIGAN

### BRANCH-HILLSDALE-ST. JOSEPH COMMUNITY HEALTH AGENCY

September 22, 2021

In the Matter of:

COVID-19 Prevention in Educational and Employment Settings within Branch, Hillsdale, and St Joseph Counties, Michigan:

The Health Officer of the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency, with consultation from the Agency's Medical Director, makes the following factual determinations and issues this Order pursuant to the Michigan Public Health Code, MCL 333.2451 and 333.2453, 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 virus that causes COVID-19 spreads mainly from person-to-person, primarily through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person or carrier coughs, sneezes, or talks. These droplets can enter the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs. Spread is more likely to occur when people are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).
2. COVID-19 is unique as a communicable disease in that every person that eventually becomes infected with COVID-19 is able to transmit the disease to others for at least a 48-hour period before they become symptomatic, or otherwise have any reason to know that they can make other people sick. Additionally, significant numbers of individuals remain asymptomatic, yet they are fully able to transmit the disease and make other people sick.
3. Recent data show that the newly dominant delta variant may induce a viral load 1,000 times higher than the original virus, indicating that the delta variant may be much more infectious than previous strains.
4. Although vaccinations prevent infection, slow community transmission, and reduce the risk of severe outcomes due to COVID-19 disease, COVID-19 remains a public health issue that impacts local institutions, particularly in educational settings where students younger than 12 years of age are ineligible to receive vaccination. Among Branch County youth aged 12-19 years, only approximately 16% are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 as of September 21, 2021. Among Hillsdale County youth aged 12-19 years, only approximately 15% are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 as of September 21, 2021. Among St. Joseph County youth aged 12-19 years, only approximately 18% are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 as of September 21, 2021. These low numbers

leave a large majority of the youth of these communities potentially vulnerable to COVID-19 disease.

5. Certain studies have shown that upwards of 95% of current hospitalizations are for those individuals that are not vaccinated.
6. In Branch, Hillsdale, and St. Joseph Counties, prior to July 1, 2021, approximately 20.6% of COVID-19 cases, either confirmed by testing or reported symptoms, were first identified as a close contact of a probable or confirmed COVID-19 case. Since July 1, 2021, which is considered the beginning of the spread of the delta variant in this region, 31.2% of COVID-19 confirmed by testing or reported symptoms were first identified as a close contact of a probable or confirmed COVID-19 case.
7. As of September 20, 2021, Branch County has a 7-day test positivity rate of 13.6%, and a 7-day new case per million count of 248.1; Hillsdale County has a 7-day test positivity rate of 19.3%, and a 7-day new case per million count of 414.4; and St. Joseph County has a 7-day test positivity rate of 15.9%, and a 7-day new case per million count of 342.8. These statistics indicate both epidemic level contagion and significant community transmission.
8. People infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 are contagious and a risk to others, thus creating an imminent danger of transmission of the disease. Isolating infectious persons for at least 10 days is essential for preventing COVID-19 transmission.
9. If failure to quarantine becomes widespread the control of community transmission will become a more significant and imminent public health danger.
10. Household transmission of COVID-19 is common, with studies finding that average transmission rates were as high as 53%. Because risk of transmission is high among households, household members who are not sick but have been exposed to COVID-19 pose a higher risk to the community if they return to public activities before a quarantine period has been completed.
11. It has been observed in educational settings that when prevention strategies such as universal masking, distancing, testing, isolation and quarantine are applied consistently that school-associated transmission of COVID-19 is significantly reduced.

**NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED** that all employers, educational institutions, and persons in Branch, Hillsdale, and St. Joseph Counties must adhere to the following rules:

1. Any individual who resides, attends school or is employed within Branch, Hillsdale, and St. Joseph Counties that is notified by the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency, Michigan Department of Health and

Human Services, a local school district, or an agent thereof, that they are a COVID-19 close contact, is required to quarantine for 10 days, or 7 days with a negative diagnostic test, as described in guidelines established by the CDC, except as otherwise provided below. MCL 419.405(3). See:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/quarantine-isolation.html>

2. Household close contacts of confirmed or probable COVID-19 cases are required to quarantine for 10 days, or 7 days with a negative diagnostic test, as described in guidelines established by the CDC.
3. All Persons in Educational Settings in Close Contact with a COVID-19 case are required to quarantine for 10 days, or 7 days with a negative diagnostic test, as described in guidelines established by the CDC. See MCL 419.405(3). However, for students in educational settings, the following rules apply as recommended by MDHHS:
  - For fully vaccinated students wearing a mask, the exposed student can remain in school if they wear a mask and monitor symptoms for 14 days after their exposure.
  - For fully vaccinated students who were not wearing a mask, or if they were within 3 feet when they were exposed, to remain in school the exposed student must wear a mask and test for COVID-19 once on day 3, 4, or 5 after their last exposure to the COVID-19-positive student. If the exposed student tests positive, then the student is required to isolate for 10 days.
  - For unvaccinated students, if the exposed student was masked at the time of exposure, the COVID-19-positive student was also masked, and the exposure was between 3-6 feet, the exposed student may stay in school, must wear a mask, and must monitor for symptoms for 14 days.
  - For unvaccinated students, if the exposed student was masked at the time of the exposure, the COVID-19-positive student was also masked, and the exposure was within 3 feet, the exposed student may remain in school so long as he or she wears a mask, obtains daily testing for the 7 days following the exposure, and monitors symptoms for 14 days.
  - For unmasked and unvaccinated students, all that are deemed a close contact must follow the general quarantine rules (10 days, or 7 days with a negative test).
4. Within 1 business day, all employers and K-12 schools must provide to local public health the names, dates of birth, addresses, phone numbers, roles, and school group affiliations of all individuals identified as close contacts in an employment and/or educational setting, regardless of vaccination status. Youth camps, youth programs, childcare centers, preschools, vocational schools, colleges, and universities must provide this information upon request.

Additional information about close contacts may be requested for effective contact tracing and notification and must be provided.

5. An employer, school, or other organization that requires or permits a close contact to act contrary to this Order is also in violation of this Order and subject to the penalties prescribed by the Michigan Public Health Code.
6. This Order may also be enforced pursuant to Part 24 of the Michigan Public Health Code, being MCL 333.2401 through MCL 333.2498. A person or organization who violates an order of a local health officer is guilty of a misdemeanor punishable by imprisonment for not more than 6 months or a fine of not more than \$200.00, or both, pursuant to MCL 333.2443. A person or organization who violates an order of a local health officer may also be subjected to citation and civil fines, pursuant to MCL 333.2461 and MCL 333.2462.

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

- a. "COVID-19 case" is defined by the Council for State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE) Executive Board and referenced in the Michigan State and Local Public Health Standard Operating Procedures. For the purposes of this order, a person must meet the confirmed or probable case definition as defined by CSTE and be documented in the Michigan Disease Surveillance System as a COVID-19 case. The current CSTE definition can be found at the following link:  
  
<https://ndc.services.cdc.gov/case-definitions/coronavirus-disease-2019-2020-08-05/>
- b. "Close contact" means being within 6 feet of someone who is a COVID-19 case for a total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period. "Close contact" also means engaging in sport activities with unavoidable frequent physical contact for a total time less than 15 minutes with someone who is identified as a COVID-19 case.
- c. "Educational Institutions" or "Educational Settings" includes youth camps, youth programs, childcare centers, preschools, primary through secondary schools, vocational schools, colleges, and universities and other organized activities outside the home where coursework is taught.
- d. "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.
- e. "Household close contact" means a close contact that lives with a COVID-19 case in a shared dwelling with common kitchen or bathroom facilities. In

dwellings with shared kitchen or bathroom facilities occupied by 20 or more unrelated persons, households are defined by individuals who share a bedroom.

- f. "Isolation" means separating people infected with COVID-19 from those who are not infected. People who are in isolation should stay home until it's safe for them to be around others. 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).
- g. "Persons in Educational Settings" means students, teachers, administrative staff, attendees, volunteers, coaches, camp leaders, and other employees or volunteers of Educational Institutions.

**IT IS FURTHER ORDERED** that this ORDER shall not apply to the following Persons:

1. Persons without symptoms who were a confirmed or probable COVID-19 case in the past 90 days and recovered.
2. Fully vaccinated persons without symptoms who are not currently in isolation as COVID-19 cases, except fully vaccinated students must still comply with the quarantine rules as set forth above for close contacts within educational institutions or educational settings.

**IT IS FURTHER REMINDED** that:

1. On January 29, 2021, CDC 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. The CDC ORDER includes school buses, both public and private.
2. This order does not repeat or supersede current MDHHS or Federal Epidemic Orders, which are incorporated by reference herein.

**THIS ORDER** is effective immediately, supersedes any prior orders, including the September 3, 2021 Order Regarding COVID-19 Prevention in Educational and Employment Settings within Branch, Hillsdale, and St Joseph Counties, Michigan, and remains in effect until further order of the health officer.



Rebecca A. Burns, MPH RS

Health Officer

September 22, 2021

# School Quarantine Guidance

What to do when a student is exposed to COVID-19 but doesn't have symptoms.

**Masking helps keep kids in the classroom.**

