



COVID-19 Guidance for Licking County Schools August 16, 2021

The Licking County Health Department (LCHD) continues to work with local school administrators to assist with planning for the upcoming school year. LCHD has continued to review updated guidance from the CDC and the Ohio Department of Health (ODH), as well as local data to assist schools with making an informed decision regarding their return to school plans.

Vaccination

The best defense against COVID-19 is to be vaccinated against the disease. LCHD urges all individuals that are eligible to be vaccinated against COVID-19 to receive the vaccine as soon as possible. Our department operates walk in clinics at our office, located at 675 Price Road in Newark, Monday through Friday from 8:00AM to 4:00PM. To view a full list of vaccine providers please visit <https://gettheshot.coronavirus.ohio.gov/>

Masks

CDC and ODH recommend that individuals wear masks in school buildings. However, ODH has not issued any type of mandate stating that individuals in a school building must wear masks. LCHD does not have the authority to make masks mandatory in schools. Parents will decide if their child wears a mask to school.

Quarantine – Classroom Settings

In schools where universal masking is not required, **vaccinated individuals** that are identified as a close contact of a person with COVID-19 will:

- Not be placed quarantine and remain in school and participate in extracurricular and sport activities as long as they have no symptoms.
- Wear a mask indoors, as much as possible, either for 14 days or until 7 days if they receive a negative viral (PCR or antigen) test performed 3-5 days after exposure.

In schools where universal masking is not required, **unvaccinated individuals that consistently wear masks** that are identified as a close contact of a person with COVID-19 will:

- Not be placed quarantine and remain in school and participate in extracurricular and sport activities as long as they have no symptoms.
- Wear a mask indoors, as much as possible, either for 14 days or until 7 days if they receive a negative viral (PCR or antigen) test performed at least 5 days after exposure.

Individuals that are identified as a close contact of a person with COVID-19 that are **unvaccinated and that do not consistently wear a mask** will:

- Quarantine for 10 days after their last exposure to the individual that has COVID-19.
- They should not attend in-person school or participate in sports or extracurricular activities.



- They can return to normal classroom and extracurricular activities after 7 days if they have received a negative viral (PCR or antigen) test that was performed at least 5 days after exposure.

When a student is placed in quarantine by LCHD, parents should contact their school attendance line to notify the school of their child's absence due to being placed in quarantine.

ODH has also issued updated quarantine guidance that states that individuals that are exposed to COVID-19 in a classroom setting do not have to quarantine if all three of these parameters are in place in school buildings

- All students and staff wear masks.
- Social distancing of at least 3' is maintained.
- Schools have documented COVID-19 prevention policies.

Individuals placed in quarantine, or their parent or guardian, will be contacted by ODH contact tracers via phone or text to determine if they are symptomatic. These individuals will be given the opportunity to determine if they would like to be contacted multiple times by the contact tracers to determine if they develop symptoms.

Quarantine – Non-Classroom Settings

Unvaccinated Individuals exposed to a case of COVID-19 outside of a classroom setting that are within 6' of an individual with COVID-19 for more than 15 cumulative minutes in a 24-hour period will be placed in quarantine for 10 days from the date of their last exposure to the individual with COVID-19.

Vaccinated individuals that are exposed to an individual with COVID-19 will not be placed in quarantine.

When a student is placed in quarantine by LCHD, parents should contact their school attendance line to notify the school of their child's absence due to being placed in quarantine.

Individuals placed in quarantine, or their parent or guardian, will be contacted by ODH contact tracers via phone or text to determine if they are symptomatic. These individuals will be given the opportunity to determine if they would like to be contacted multiple times by the contact tracers to determine if they develop symptoms.

Isolation

Any person that tests positive for COVID-19 will be placed in isolation by LCHD for 10 days from the date of their symptoms starting **regardless of their vaccination status.**

Social Distancing

Schools should continue to provide social distancing of at least 3' between desks whenever possible. Additionally, distancing should be implemented to the extend possible in other settings such as the cafeteria, locker rooms, extracurricular activities, etc.



Hand Hygiene

LCHD also continues to recommend frequent and proper hand washing for all individuals. Washing your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds can help reduce the spread of many diseases including COVID-19.

Enhanced Cleaning

Schools should continue to implement the enhanced cleaning activities that were implemented during last school year. This should include high touch surfaces and other areas where COVID-19 can be spread.

COVID-19 School Data

LCHD has conducted a local statistical analysis of COVID data collected since March of 2020 to set threshold values for the county and each school district in the county. The thresholds are used as an indicator for when additional data analysis is needed to identify possible clusters or outbreaks of COVID-19. This data is monitored on a continual basis. If cases rise above a threshold level within a school district, LCHD will notify the school and conduct further analysis to determine if there is transmission of the virus within one of the school buildings in the district.

If transmission is identified within a school building, LCHD will issue recommendations to the school to combat the spread of the virus which may include universal masking within a building or specific classrooms, documented enhanced cleaning, and/or closing certain classrooms or closing the entire building. The recommendations that are made will be based on the number of cases identified, and the severity of the spread of COVID-19 within a building or classroom. These instances will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Conclusion

During the 2020-2021 school year, LCHD did not identify spread of COVID-19 within close contacts identified in classrooms. Circumstances during last school year were different due to the mandates that were put in place at the state level. As of now, there are no mandates in place that require schools to take any type of action such as masking or social distancing. Only recommendations are in place.

LCHD understands the importance of in person learning for students and staff members across the county. Our staff worked extremely hard last year to assist county schools with holding in person classes for the majority of the school year. Licking County was one of a few counties in the state that was able to effectively hold in person learning. We will continue to monitor the data and communicate with school leaders to make the 2021-2022 as safe and effective as possible.