



Iowa County Health Department

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Dear School Districts,

In-person learning is critical for the educational and social development of students of all ages. The highest priority is to ensure that schools open and operate in a manner that prioritizes the health and safety of students, teachers, school staff, their families, and the community. Preventing the spread of COVID-19, keeping children healthy, and meeting their educational and social needs are not mutually exclusive goals.

Guidance below reflects that of the U.S Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), U.S Department of Education (DOE), Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS), and Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI). Our success with responding and controlling outbreaks depends on the assistance of partners such as health care and settings such as schools.

Layered mitigation measures such as masking, social distancing, cleaning and isolation and quarantine (through contact tracing) are critical layers in controlling transmission. A pandemic requires the entire community to contribute to the response. Keeping contagious and COVID ill students and staff out of the school is important in maintaining school operations and keeping kids in school.

- Implementation of [Guidelines for the Prevention, Investigation, and Control of COVID-19 Outbreaks in K-12 Schools in Wisconsin](#) - Updated 08/2021 (DHS)
- Implementation of [COVID-19 Infection Control and Mitigation Measures for Wisconsin Schools 2021/2022](#) – Updated 08/2021 (DPI)
- Implementation of a masking requirement for all students, staff, and visitors in indoor settings. Iowa County, according to the CDC COVID-19 Data Tracker at <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view> is categorized at a **high risk** level of community transmission for COVID-19. **Key points** from the [CDC's recommendations](#):
 - Everyone, including fully vaccinated people, should wear a mask in public indoor settings in areas of [substantial or high transmission](#).
 - Everyone, including fully vaccinated people, may choose to wear a mask regardless of the level of transmission, particularly if they are immunocompromised or at [increased risk for severe disease](#) from COVID-19, or if they have someone in their household who is immunocompromised, at increased risk of severe disease or not fully vaccinated.
 - Fully vaccinated people who have a known exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 should be tested 3-5 days after exposure, and should wear a mask in public indoor settings for 14 days or until they receive a negative test result.
 - CDC recommends universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors to schools, regardless of vaccination status.

- Implementation of quarantine for all close contacts of positively confirmed cases. While shortened options for quarantines (7- and 10-days with appropriate testing and symptom monitoring) may be utilized to minimize interruptions in learning, 14-day quarantine upon exposure remains the safest option. Vaccinated persons may refrain from quarantine but should wear a mask for 14 days when around others, unless tested negative 3-5 days after exposure.

Our partners are critical to prevention and control of COVID-19. Because it is a highly contagious disease, COVID-19 is considered to be a category 1 reportable illness per [DHS Chapter 145](#) and requires reporting information to the local health department within 24 hours:

DHS 145.04 Reports of communicable diseases.

(1) Responsibility for reporting.

DHS 145.04(1)(d)(d) Any teacher, principal or nurse serving a school or day care center knowing of a case or suspected case in the school or center shall notify the local health officer or, if required under Appendix A of this chapter, the state epidemiologist, in the manner prescribed in this section.

(e) **Any person who knows or suspects that a person has a communicable disease shall report the facts to the local health officer** or, if required under Appendix A of this chapter, to the state epidemiologist.

- On-site testing for symptomatic individuals or outbreak prevention purposes. Wisconsin Department of Health Services has made testing resources available to any school interested in on-site testing to ensure that in-person learning is prioritized with minimal interruption.
- In addition to the mitigation measures included in guidance from CDC and DHS, we also strongly recommend vaccination to protect our community from COVID-19.

I would finish by adding that I completely empathize with the *covid fatigue* we all feel; we suffer from it as well. However, our goals are to keep people safe and healthy and the best way to accomplish this is to follow the science. The above recommended measures are basic fundamentals of prevention and we sincerely need and value the collective help of all partners and residents.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and your partnership to protect our community.

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Director/Health Officer
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