

MEDIA RELEASE

Information **Advisory** **Warning** **Update**

DATE: SEPTEMBER 30, 2021

TIME: 7:45 PM

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Jennifer Michaluk, M.Ed, CHES
Public Information Officer, St. Clair County Health Department
jmichaluk@stclaircounty.org

St. Clair County Health Department Rescinds Public Health Quarantine Order

The St. Clair County Health Department (SCCHD) regrettably rescinds the September 8, 2021 Public Health Order requiring residents in St. Clair County to quarantine after a close exposure with a person infected with COVID-19. The order is rescinded as of 11:59 pm on September 30, 2021. SCCHD is simultaneously issuing a Public Health Quarantine Policy and strongly encourages all to follow.

The decision is a result of Gov. Whitmer signing the 2022 state budget which includes language from Senate Bill 82 and House Bill 4400 that threatens public health funding. According to pertinent language, any health officer that has an emergency order under section 2453 of the public health code, 1978 PA 368, MCL 333.2453, in effect of October 1, 2021, will lose funding. St. Clair County Health Department could face a funding loss of \$573,000 in essential public health programming. Those dollars support important community programs and services such as immunizations, infectious disease control, sexually transmitted disease control and prevention, hearing & vision screenings, and food protection.

Although Gov. Whitmer stated Wednesday that this language was “unconstitutional”, SCCHD has been advised that this issue needs to be resolved in the court of law. Until then, further public health orders under MCL 333.2453 will be paused. However, it is SCCHD’s intention to closely monitor COVID-19 case and transmission rates and will not hesitate to issue further orders to control increasing threats as allowable under law.

Dr. Annette Mercatante, Medical Health Officer emphasizes, *“Despite the rescission of the Order, the value of quarantine is irrefutable. Quarantine is still one of the best ways to control a communicable infectious disease. We urge citizens to follow public health guidance and continue to quarantine when exposed to COVID-19 as our policy states.*

Mercatante continued *“Our concern is that failure to comply with public health guidance will disproportionately affect those unable to get vaccinated and our most vulnerable. Taking care of our weakest will make us all stronger.”*

St. Clair County is experiencing ongoing, sustained high transmission of COVID-19 since late summer. Businesses, educational institutions, and individuals, are urged to wear a mask when in indoor public spaces, to stay home and get tested when they have symptoms of COVID-19, and to quarantine after they have had a close contact exposure with someone who has COVID-19.

For more information visit the website, www.scchealth.co and social media [@scchdmi](#).

#END#

STATE OF MICHIGAN
ST. CLAIR COUNTY
ST. CLAIR COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT

In the Matter of:

PUBLIC HEALTH POLICY
ESTABLISHING PROCEDURES FOR THE QUARANTINE
OF PERSONS IDENTIFIED AS COVID-19 CLOSE CONTACTS

Matters of concern to the health of St. Clair County citizens having been brought to the St. Clair County Public Health Department. Given the primary responsibility to protect the health and safety of the citizens of St Clair County the Medical Health Officer having made the following determinations, issues this policy and recommendations to establish procedures to be followed by, and restrict the public gathering of, healthy persons identified as close contacts of a known or probable case of COVID-19:

DETERMINATIONS

1. Limiting community transmission of the infectious agent that causes the COVID-19 disease is a significant factor in the control of the current epidemic and is necessary to protect the public health of the citizens of St. Clair County.
2. Quarantine of healthy persons who are a close contact, is necessary to control the community transmission of COVID-19.
3. The St. Clair County Department of Public Health determines that a person is a close contact based upon the guidelines issued by the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as applied to the local conditions of the COVID-19 epidemic in St. Clair County, at the time of the contact.
4. Controlling community transmission has a demonstrated positive impact on the course of the COVID-19 epidemic, and reduces the strain on hospitals, emergency medical services, ambulance and patient transport service, and other essential public health services.
5. An increasing degree of public pressure has been directed at schools, employers and other organizations to ignore the significant public health benefit of quarantine and permit active participation of close contacts in school, sports, the workplace and other public events, despite the increased risk such conduct poses to specific populations or community transmission of COVID-19 during the current epidemic in St. Clair County.
6. If failure to quarantine becomes widespread the control of community transmission will become a more significant public health problem.

7. Schools, employers, and other organizations have asked the St. Clair County Public Health Department for guidance concerning the quarantine of close contacts.

8. 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; and, at least 20% (and in some populations as many as 40%) of all known positive cases will never become symptomatic, yet they are fully able to transmit the disease and make other people sick.

9. In St. Clair County, in the past 2 months, 22.4% of all confirmed positive COVID-19 cases were first identified as a close contact of another probable or confirmed positive case, before they became positive themselves.

10. Since March 16, 2020, St. Clair County has experienced 19,504 laboratory confirmed positive cases of COVID-19. As of September 30th, 2021, St. Clair County has a 7-day test positivity rate of 10%, and a 7-day new case per 100,000 count of 367. These statistics indicate both epidemic level contagion and substantial community transmission.

11. Because a close contact is able to infect others with COVID-19 before they, or the St. Clair County Public Health Department, have a reasonable basis to believe that they harbor the specific infectious agent that causes COVID-19, certain procedures are required, including the quarantine of healthy persons who have been close contacts of probable or known positive COVID-19 cases.

12. These procedures, and restrictions on public gatherings of close contacts are necessary to maintain the public health of the citizens of St. Clair County, and control the COVID-19 epidemic.

Based on the preceding determinations it is highly recommended by the St Clair County Health Department:

- A. Any individual who resides, attends school or is employed within St. Clair County that is notified by the St. Clair County Public Health Department, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, a local school district, or an agent thereof, that they are a COVID-19 close contact, is advised to quarantine for ten (10) days, or 7 days with a negative diagnostic test on day 5 or greater, or such other duration as may be required in a written public notice issued by the St. Clair County Public Health Department. This applies to individuals who were both masked and unmasked at the time of exposure.
- B. A fully vaccinated individual who comes in close contact with someone who is COVID-19 positive can remain in school/work if they wear a mask and monitor for symptoms for 14 days after their exposure. They should test for COVID-19 3 to 5 days after their last exposure to the COVID-19 positive person. This applies to individuals who were both masked and unmasked at the time of exposure. Additionally, exposed persons should remain masked in public settings until a negative test result is received or quarantine is completed.
- C. If the exposed individual tests positive, regardless of vaccination status, then the individual should isolate for 10 days from the onset of symptoms or in the absence of symptoms, from the date of the positive test. Additionally, if an exposed individual

becomes ill while in quarantine they should seek COVID testing and remain isolated until a test confirms lack of COVID illness AND symptoms have improved.

- D. K-12 students within an indoor school setting at a St. Clair County school may have their quarantine modified if:
 - a. Both the student who was exposed and the student infected were masked and the students remained 3-6 feet apart. The exposed student can remain in school if they continue to wear a mask, but they should monitor for symptoms for 14 days following the exposure OR
 - b. Both the student who was exposed and the student infected were masked and the students were less than 3 feet apart. The exposed student can remain in school if they wear a mask. They should monitor for symptoms for 14 days and test daily before coming to the school building for the 7 days following exposure (as testing supplies allow). They should continue to monitor for symptoms for a total of 14 days following the exposure.
- E. Upon request, confirmed and probable cases, businesses, schools, and other facilities must provide the names and phone numbers of individuals with possible COVID-19 exposure to MDHHS and local health departments to aid in contact tracing and case investigation efforts.
- F. The quarantine should occur at the person's home, or at such other location, that will permit them to refrain from public contact or gatherings, whether indoors or outdoors.
- G. The quarantine should occur in the manner recommended by the CDC Guidelines and approved by the medical health officer, at the time the contact occur.



Medical Health Officer
St. Clair County Public Health Department

Date and Time Signed: September 30, 2021 @ 6:30 p.m.