

ST. CLAIR COUNTY BACK TO SCHOOL GUIDANCE

Interim guidance for COVID-19 prevention in school settings

BACK TO SCHOOL FOR 2021-2022

Updated 9.10.2021

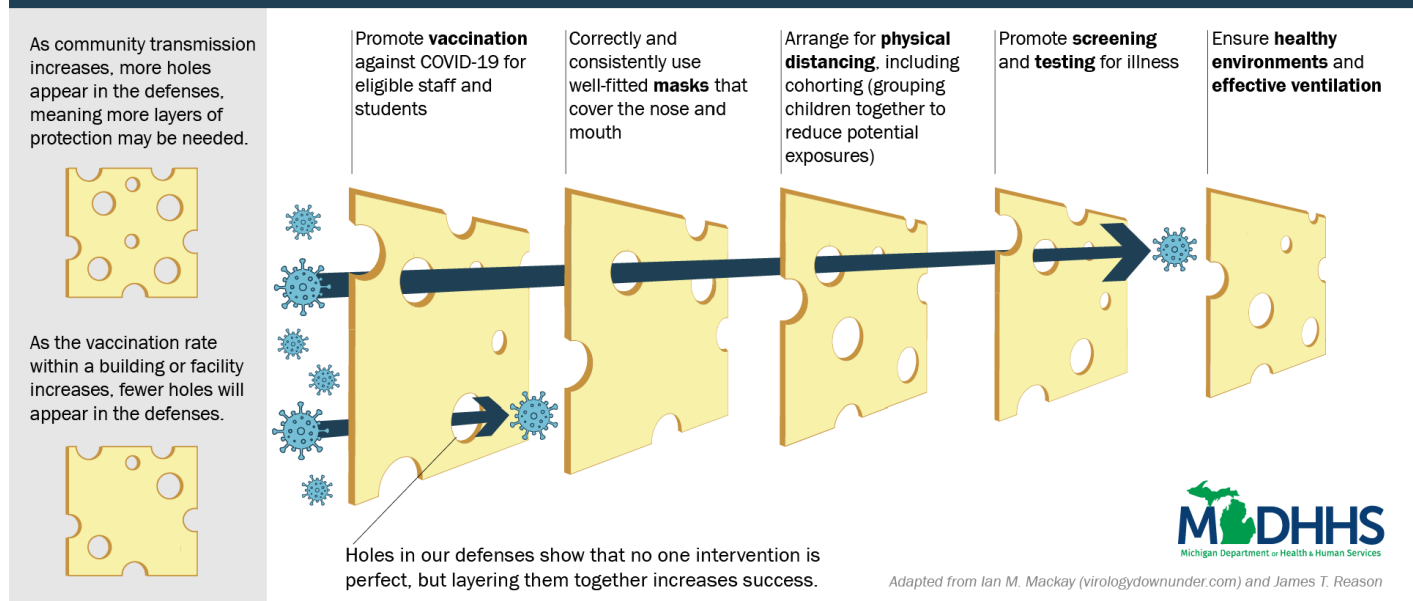
Schools provide safe, supportive learning environments for students as well as critical services including school meal programs and social, physical, behavioral, and mental health services. Students benefit from in-person learning, and safely returning to in-person instruction in the fall 2021 is a priority. **Vaccination is currently the leading public health prevention strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic.** Promoting vaccination can help schools safely return to in-person learning as well as extracurricular activities and sports. In addition, schools will need to continue other COVID-19 prevention strategies as they remain critical to protect students, teachers, and staff, who are not fully vaccinated.

LAYERS OF DEFENSE

Schools can layer multiple prevention strategies to prevent transmission within school buildings, reduce disruptions to in-person learning, and help protect the people who are not fully vaccinated or eligible for vaccination, which currently includes all children under the age of 12 years. All prevention strategies provide some level of protection, and layered strategies implemented at the same time provide the greatest level of protection.

Layers of Defense Against COVID-19 in Schools

CDC recommended prevention strategies can be layered in different ways – the number and intensity of the layers can increase if community transmission increases



From MDHHS "Interim Recommendations for Operating Schools Safely When There Is COVID-19 Community Transmission" published June 25, 2021

In addition to vaccination, routine handwashing and cough/sneeze etiquette, physical distancing where possible, staying home when sick and getting tested, contact tracing in combination with quarantine and isolation, and cleaning and disinfection are also important layers of prevention to keep schools safe.

MONITORING COVID-19 COMMUNITY TRANSMISSION & PREVENTION STRATEGIES

The St. Clair County Health Department (SCCHD) will provide ongoing monitoring of community transmission in St. Clair County and the surrounding region. This data surveillance allows the Health Department to support school leaders in making informed and educated decisions that are best for school operations, students and staff. SCCHD will provide regular updates and adjust recommendations to schools based on the CDC's predesignated indicators and thresholds for community transmission of COVID-19.

CDC indicators & thresholds	Low Transmission	Moderate Transmission	Substantial Transmission	High Transmission
Total new cases per 100,000 persons in the past 7 days	0-9	10-49	50-99	≥100
Percentage of diagnostic tests that are positive during the past 7 days	<5.0%	5.0-7.9%	8.0-9.9%	≥10.0%
What SCCHD recommends for school operations & functions <i>Note: information shown here are recommendations from SCCHD. Check with your district or school for details on current operational plans</i> <i>*Face masks are recommended for all staff, teachers, students and visitors regardless of vaccination status per July 27 CDC guidelines.</i>	In-person instruction Face masks are recommended* Normal classroom & recess activities take place Visitors & guests allowed in buildings Athletics & extracurricular activities proceed as scheduled	In-person instruction Face masks are recommended* Consider limiting crowded indoor activities Visitors & guests allowed in buildings Athletic practices permitted; prioritize outdoor activities Consider face masks for some indoor extra-curricular activities	In-person instruction supported; some remote instruction introduced Face masks may be required for unvaccinated students/staff when indoors Cohort classrooms; avoid crowded indoor activities; increased physical distancing Limited visitors & guests Athletic competitions may be paused; required physical distancing at practices Group extra-curricular activities suspended; some individual activities continue	In-person instruction prioritized; remote instruction if needed Face masks may be required for unvaccinated and vaccinated students/staff when indoors Testing may be required Cohort classrooms; pause group activities; increased physical distancing Only essential visitors; move to virtual meetings Athletic competitions and practices may be paused Extracurricular activities suspended

REMAINING FLEXIBLE IS KEY!

Flexibility is key as the COVID-19 pandemic is ongoing and the situation remains fluid. SCCHD is hopeful that transmission levels will remain in the low or moderate categories, due to the protective effects that the vaccinations provide. However, should transmission rates increase to the substantial or high categories, SCCHD will advise schools to take additional mitigation measures for the safety of all students and staff.