

# TUSCOLA COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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Ann Hepfer, RN, BS, Health Officer

May 11, 2021

Dear Superintendents and school personnel,

The Tuscola County Health Department recognizes the mass confusion around the quarantine and isolation issues that were raised last Friday across the state. Below in the bulleted area you will find the TCHD new recommendations. We continue to recommend local school districts follow the current guidance from the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) which includes a 10-day quarantine for all close contacts of confirmed and probable COVID-19 cases. Our recommendation represents the best practice for the protection of area children, teachers and staff, and the prevention of outbreaks in the school setting.. **We stand by our recommendation of a 10-day quarantine for those with close contact to a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19.** Questions around this issue have centered around the “enforcement” of quarantine. We have never wavered in our advice for area schools and our support for their efforts in mitigating the risk of COVID-19 remains steadfast. Our strong recommendation for quarantine rather than requirement by local order also aligns with our typical approach in protecting the public’s health and has not changed. We appreciate the vast cooperation of families and schools across our region throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. We believe quarantine of close contacts continues to be a critical tool in preventing the spread of illness, especially to vulnerable community members. The recent changes made to the criteria used to identify close contacts within a classroom setting are based on our assessment of emerging evidence and downward trending cases. We believe this change requires close monitoring to protect the safety of everyone before any further changes are made. We will continue to work with area schools to quickly identify close contact exposures in the school population to ensure students and staff can finish the school year safe and healthy. The Health Department is not intending to issue local orders requiring quarantine of students exposed to COVID-19 at this time. We will continue to closely monitor local data. Should any changes occur that need immediate attention, actions will be taken for the health and safety of students, staff and our residents. As vaccination levels increase, it is our hope that transmission rates will drop significantly. As of today, adolescents aged 12-17 are eligible for the Pfizer vaccine with a parent or legal guardian present. To locate a vaccination clinic, please visit the health department website at [www.tchd.us](http://www.tchd.us).

### Mission

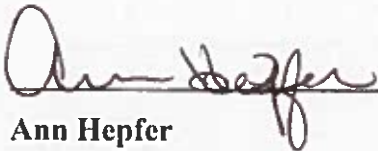
*The Tuscola County Health Department actively strives to enhance our community's quality of life by disease prevention, health protection and healthy lifestyle promotion.*

## New Schools Recommendations for Reducing COVID19 Illness

Effective 05.11.2021

- In the academic classrooms K-12, individuals within three (3) feet from a case, for greater than 15 minutes (cumulative or sequential), can be considered a high-risk exposure and result in quarantine. This only applies if strict mask adherence is being followed.
- A six-foot distance will still be used to assess exposure in all situations outside of the K-12 classrooms (hallways, cafeterias, playgrounds, busses, etc.) or in classroom situations where risk is deemed elevated.
- Children in quarantine due to close contact can have a PCR test on day 7 (not a rapid or antibody test), if they are negative they could return to school before day 10. They must still monitor for symptoms through day 14.
- These are subject to change if the situation warrants (for ex., sudden surge in cases, etc.).
- Outside recess in groups smaller than 100 no masks necessary

Sincerely,



**Ann Hepfer**  
Health Officer



**Dr. Mark Hamed MD MBA MPH FAAFP**  
Medical Director

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