



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: February 18, 2022

CONTACT: Kayleigh J. Blaney, MPH, DrPH-c
Deputy Health Officer

PHONE: (810) 257-3802

RE: Genesee County Health Department Update on Public Health Orders and School Guidance

As COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations continue to decline in Genesee County and throughout the state, the Genesee County Health Department (GCHD) is updating its mask guidance for public settings, including schools and childcare settings, to reflect that Michigan is entering a post-surge, recovery phase, [per the State of Michigan Department of Health and Human Services updated guidance from February 16, 2022](#).

Moving forward, the state guidelines break the COVID-19 cycle into three key phases:

- Response - Local and state public health implement rapid response to a surge, such as may be seen with a new variant. The public may be advised to increase masking, testing and social distancing.
- Recovery - Post-surge. No immediate resurgence predicted. Local and state public health will monitor conditions that could lead to future surges.
- Readiness - A surge in cases is expected, with implications on severity of illness and hospital capacity. Increased communication to the public regarding possible new risks.

The rates in our community are rapidly coming down, vaccines are readily available, and hospitalization utilization is recovering. There is no immediate resurgence predicted when looking at new variants of concern. Per the new MDHHS guidance, we are in the Recovery phase.

As indicated above, in this phase, public health continues to monitor for conditions that may lead to a new wave beginning. This is also when public health strategies will begin to shift towards supporting personal responsibility as we learn to live with COVID-19 long-term. However, all individuals, regardless of vaccination status, must continue to practice universal masking in high-risk congregate settings including long-term care facilities, homeless shelters, correctional facilities, jails, and health care facilities. All individuals, regardless of vaccination status, should also wear a mask during isolation and quarantine periods to stop further community spread of COVID-19. Masks remain an important tool in mitigating spread of COVID-19 and individuals who may be at higher risk of infection or who feel better protected when masked should be supported in their choice to mask.

GCHD will continue to support local school districts by recommending evidence-based public health measures, educating on current guidance and practices, and making recommendations to keep students and staff safe and healthy in school settings. However, with the decreasing case transmission numbers and the availability of testing and vaccines in the community, the GCHD public health emergency order in response to the COVID-19 pandemic: Isolation and Quarantine Order in Educational Settings, dated January 14, 2022, and the update to the orders on November 15, 2021, regarding mask use in classrooms with children under age five are hereby rescinded by the Medical Health Officer for GCHD with an effective date of February 22, 2022. Daycare centers should consult the [current Licensing and Regulatory Affairs \(LARA\) guidelines](#).

Genesee County Health Department

###

Page 2 of 2