



## Macon County Health Department

503 N. Missouri St

Macon, MO 63552

Ph: (660) 395-4711 Fax: (660) 385-2014

Web Site: [www.maconmohealth.org](http://www.maconmohealth.org)

November 17, 2020 – **Updated November 25, 2020**

To: School Boards and Administration  
Cc: Macon County Health Department Board of Trustees  
From: Mike Chambers, Administrator

**The Macon County Health Department Board of Trustees have revisited the Governor's school guidelines in light of the DHSS and DESE clarifications on November 19, 2020 to the state school quarantine guidelines, specifically related to the Frequently Asked Questions #20 which provides that properly masked contacts in the school setting will be required to quarantine outside of school; and, #21 which provides that properly masked close contacts in a school setting will not be allowed to participate in sports or other extracurricular activities.**

**Because we recognize the importance of children remaining in seat in a school setting, and, we firmly believe that proper masking does slow the spread of COVID-19, for those schools whose Board approves a district-wide mask mandate, and whose administration works in coordination with the health department to develop an implementation and tracking plan, then the Macon County Health Department will support the DHSS/DESE school guidelines dated November 19, 2020 for those schools. Mask mandates and implementation plan must be put in place for a minimum of two weeks prior to the guidelines' implementation in order to allow the school to create a mask-wearing culture, and, to test their implementation and tracking plan. Schools must continue to work with health department disease investigators on positive students and staff and for contact tracing efforts. The health department will continue to track baseline data and should trends continue to increase, or an outbreak happen in the school setting, then more strict guidelines determined by the health department in coordination with school administration may be enforced.**

**A plan does not have to be elaborate but should include the following elements:**

- **Mask mandate policy statement**
- **Educating students and staff on appropriate masks and proper wearing**
- **Tracking masked students and staff for potential contact tracing**
- **Contact tracing and communicating with the health department**
- **Monitoring movement of close contacts at school**
- **Monitoring the health of close contacts at school**

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- **Protecting vulnerable students and staff (with known health issues, etc.)**
- **Exceptions to masking (special education, students with health risks, etc.)**
- **School visitors/spectators at events**
- **Sending school students**

**With a relaxed quarantine guideline, it is important that schools protect those students and staff with health conditions who may not be able to wear a mask for an entire day, and, that they do so by tracking movement of close contacts within the building. Please contact Mike Chambers at the health department with any questions 660-395-4711 or if you wish to put a plan together.**

Original announcement:

After reviewing current COVID-19 trends in schools, and the school guidelines announced by Governor Parson on November 12, the Macon County Health Department Board of Trustees has voted not to adopt or support the new school guidelines published by DHSS and DESE. However, the health Board has elected to deem school staff essential as outlined below.

Outbreak trends continue to rise in Macon County. The first half of this month we have seen almost 250 new cases which is double the combined totals of September and October cases. Our positivity rate continues to climb. We continue to see hospitalizations of otherwise healthy citizens. Hospitals within our region are seeing high numbers of COVID-19 patients with some hospitals on the verge of short staffing. Local nursing homes are now reporting positive cases within their resident population and staff. And, we are trending at one death per week of Macon County citizens whose health prior to COVID-19 infection would not have led to their early death.

Within our schools, several of our school districts are faring well during this outbreak. La Plata and Macon R-1 have seen the highest number of positive students and staff so far in November. La Plata's positive rate from those in quarantine is 6.1%; and, Macon R-1's positive rate of those in quarantine is at 7.9%. The trend we see within Macon R-1's district is that not only are quarantined students converting to positive, but that their close contacts are also converting to positive with no other identifying positive contacts outside the school system. This trend points to active transmission within the school through student contact.

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Teachers and school administrative staff make up 25% of the November positive cases in schools. However, there has been so far no secondary transmission of COVID-19 from school staff to students. Given this data, the health department Board of Trustees have voted to adopt the following: for those schools, public and private, whose Board votes to implement a district-wide mask mandate, Macon County Health Department will deem all staff and faculty in those school systems as essential workers.

Schools who vote to adopt a mask mandate will be required to submit an implementation plan to track and enforce consistent and proper masking of faculty, staff and students, including addressing masking at school sponsored events, to be approved by the health department. This will allow school administrators, teachers, custodial staff, food service, maintenance, and other pertinent school staff to remain working if they are a close contact as long as they remain asymptomatic. We anticipate that if properly implemented, this should have a resulting effect of minimizing transmission within the school which will help keep kids in-seat learning.

To help reinforce masking to reduce community transmission, the health department has begun a Mask Up Macon County campaign designed to encourage masking in public in an effort to reduce transmission. Widespread support of this campaign will also help keep kids in-seat learning and reduce the need for virtual learning.

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