



Monday December 7, 2020

## Re: Public Health Recommendations for School Administrators, Staff, Parents and Students

The mission of Summit County Public Health (SCPH) is to protect and promote the health of the entire community through programs and activities designed to address the safety, health and well-being of the people who live in Summit County.

Since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, SCPH has worked to implement disease mitigation strategies and provide guidance and technical assistance to our communities. Over the past nine months, SCPH has both issued and enforced a variety of state and local health orders and/or advisories designed to keep the public safe. Those orders/advisories include and/or are related to: mass gatherings; Stay at Home, masking, sports, alcohol sales; curfew, child care centers, polling locations, entertainment venues, recreation, restaurants and food service, salons, gyms, nursing homes and others. Full advisories and orders can be found at the following links: [State of Ohio](#); [Summit County Public Health](#)

Our initial guidance for schools was based on risk level of the selected model (please see Appendix 1). More interactions between students, teachers, and staff creates increased risk for transmission of the COVID-19 virus.

SCPH was notified on 12/3/20 that we have reached Level 4/ Purple in the Ohio Public Health Advisory System. Level 4/ Purple is the highest level of the Ohio Public Health Advisory System and indicates severe exposure and spread. Due to this new designation and the increasing incidence of COVID-19 cases in our community, SCPH has identified the following priorities:

1. **Keeping the hospital systems from becoming overwhelmed.** Hospitals need to be available for the public for a variety of health issues. Doing our part to keep hospitals from reaching capacity ensures that everyone can receive the healthcare that they need.
2. **Keeping children in school.** SCPH understands the importance of students being in school for their academic and social development. Although we have had limited spread within the school buildings, community spread poses a significant threat to keeping kids in school.



3. **Keeping businesses open.** A strong economy is an important factor in the health of a community. SCPH recognizes that keeping businesses open is necessary for the long-term financial stability of our economy. Many residents have made great sacrifices to keep us all safe. Please do your part.

SCPH strongly recommends school institutions and residents engage in the following practices in order to achieve these identified priorities:

1. All youth, collegiate, amateur and club sports competitions should stop. This includes inter- and intra- team scrimmages and close contact drills. Skills training and conditioning with proper precautions can continue.
2. Consider dropping your learning modality by one level for older students in order to minimize risk.
3. Limit your activity to one necessary activity per day. An activity is defined as school or work. All other activities should cease.
4. Minimize all non-essential travel.
5. Shop online or utilize curbside pickup for groceries and household items.
6. Utilize take-out or curbside services at restaurants.
7. Decrease in-person interactions outside of the household.
8. Limit attending gatherings of any size.
9. Take care of each other. Be respectful and wear a mask. Keep your distance. Wash your hands. Stay home if you are sick.

School districts need to remain nimble and to modify strategies on a real time basis that assures the safety of everyone. By following these recommendations, we not only protect the students, but we protect the school staff and student's family members as well. We appreciate your willingness to review our considerations for the safety of all.



Appendix 1 - ***Below are our recommendations in order of risk for disease spread and transmission for the 2020/2021 school year:***

## Preferred Option #1 - Lowest Risk for Disease Transmission and Spread

- SCPH strongly recommends that Summit County K-12 schools begin the 2020-2021 academic year in a remote learning environment as the preferred option for students. SCPH recognizes that some students with special education, intervention, and social/emotional learning needs are best taught in an in-person environment and these students should have access to those services in small, in-person group settings during this remote learning period.
- SCPH offered recommendations to schools on July 24<sup>th</sup> regarding the delay of fall contact sports interteam play until October 1, 2020, that are identified as moderate or high risk where social distancing and masking are difficult.

## Option #2 - Reduced Risk for Disease Transmission and Spread

- A hybrid model of learning, where children split time between home and school for remote and in person learning. This could include modified class sizes to accommodate different learning models by grade level which meet the CDC guidelines.
- This model should include mandatory masks for all students who do not have an exemption, a rigorous cleaning schedule and social distancing of 6 ft as much as possible. Districts should also follow ODE, ODH and CDC guidance. **See See SCPH attached summary.**

## Option #3 - Highest Risk for Disease Transmission and Spread

- In-person education includes school-aged children in school 5 days a week with no modification to class size. This model presents the highest amount of risk and extreme precautions should be taken to implement disease mitigation strategies such as mandatory mask wearing, rigorous cleaning, and social distancing of 6 ft as much as possible.

