



HEALTH DISTRICT

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Portage County Health District (PCHD) School Restart Guidance

PCHD created this document as a reference for schools (K-12) as they plan to return to classes in the Fall of 2020. Plans should focus on strategies that are proven to reduce the risk of COVID-19: health policies, masking, disinfection/cleaning, hand washing and social distancing. These strategies are not mandates, merely suggestions for a layered approach to the development of a School Health and Safety Plan. Pre-K classes under ODE licensure are recommended to follow the school guidance, where as pre-K classes under ODJFS licensure should follow the day care guidance.

Schools should include a contingency plan for going to virtual learning within a very short timeframe. For example, there may be situations where the contacts of a COVID-19 positive case must transition to virtual learning. We do not expect perfection but rather more layers and precautions and a heightened index of suspicion. When making plans consider what is the good, better, and best practice. Communicate effectively with parents, students, staff, etc. and set expectations early.

Please Note: PCHD does not approve school plans-this is between the School Superintendent and the School Board.

Vigilantly Assess for Symptoms

- Self-report of temperatures everyday by all staff and students. Unless the school has a positive case then the school should monitor the temperatures of all administrators, staff and students as they arrive daily.
- Develop a mechanism to track self-report temperatures reported by all administrators and staff. Alternately, symptom and temperature check daily for staff.
- Recommend adding a thermometer to the school supply list
- Assess for the following symptoms: fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath, fatigue, muscle aches or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, runny nose, nausea/vomiting, diarrhea
- Keep individuals in cohorts
- Plan for all scenarios (siblings in different grades, etc.)
- Isolating students in the School Nursing Clinic
 - Unacceptable – same room
 - Better- same room with dedicated space
 - Best – separate room
- What happens if an individual has an elevated temperature?
 - 72 hours no fever can return to school. Depend on Primary Care Physician for a diagnosis and clearance to return. Presume COVID-19 positive unless proven otherwise. If showing COVID-19 symptoms immediately remove from school.

- Refer to the CDC guidance for job specific guidance for what Personal Protective Equipment is needed for School Nurses. If within six feet recommend face shield in addition to surgical grade face covering in place of cloth face covering, gloves and gowns for nurse.
- Be aware of new symptoms versus chronic condition or common ailments (eg. the student who is in the nurse's office one a week for migraines). However, COVID-19 may be masked by underlying conditions. Error on the side of caution with all suspected symptoms.
- Currently there are no travel restrictions for individuals who leave the state of Ohio in terms of returning to school. Schools should be aware of travel restrictions for Ohio as well as other states for their students, families and staff.

Wash and Sanitize Hands to Prevent Spread

- Install hand sanitizer dispensers in all classrooms and buses.
- Have students and staff take scheduled hand sanitizer and hand washing breaks.
- Ask students to bring in hand sanitizer to keep at their desk.
- Schedule class bathroom breaks so hand washing by students can be observed.
- Hand Washing:
 - **Before, during, and after** preparing food
 - **Before** eating food
 - **Before and after** caring for someone at home who is sick with vomiting or diarrhea
 - **Before and after** treating a cut or wound
 - **After** using the toilet
 - **After** [changing diapers or cleaning up a child who has used the toilet](#)
 - **After** blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
 - **After** touching an animal, animal feed, or animal waste
 - **After** handling pet food or pet treats
 - **After** touching garbage
- Require students to wash/sanitize hands prior to eating.
- Have students wash/sanitize hands when returning from recess.

Thoroughly Clean and Sanitize School Environment to Limit Spread on Shared Surfaces

- Follow the directions on disinfectants because there are varying dry time requirements.
- Please be aware of solicitors that try to sell you expensive equipment to clean your facilities. These items are not necessary EPA approved disinfectants and may be ineffective against COVID-19. Follow the directions because there are varying dry time requirements.
- Clean surfaces frequently throughout the day, especially high touch surfaces and shared materials. Shared surfaces include door handles, light switches, etc.
- Sanitation wipes or disinfectants labeled for use against COVID-19 should be available in each room and shared space areas.
- Have students wipe down desks with approved sanitizer after use.
- Recommend quarantine of 24-48 hours for books or materials being returned to the library and use effective hand hygiene when handling books and materials.
- Water fountains pose varying levels of risks. Kids typically place their mouth on water fountains and can contaminate them so a **traditional fountain is not recommended**.

- Good – students use the drinking fountain but it is sanitized regularly
- Better – students refill personal water bottles at drinking fountain
- Best – students have multiple personal water bottles that are refilled from home
- Focus time and resources on things we know work and are most effective. UV and ozone may be effective but are not currently considered the most effective and have variations in efficacy. These methods are not harmful but might not be a good investment.
- HVAC should be running optimally and to increase ventilation.
- Increase ventilation in buses (lower window at least ¼ inch)
- If you have/had a positive case in your building:
 - Close off areas used by the person who was sick for at least 24 hours
 - Open outside doors and windows to increase circulation.
 - Clean and disinfect all areas used by the person who is sick, such as classrooms, bathrooms, common areas and shared materials.
 - Vacuum the area after it is empty if it is appropriate.
- Once the area is appropriately disinfected, it can be opened for use.
- If more than 7 days since the person who is sick visited or used the area, additional disinfection is not necessary.
- Literature says air movement is good and fans are actually promoted to help circulate air. Do not block (eg. books, toys, etc.) ventilators that run under the windows because it prevents air circulation.

Practice Social Distancing

- Busing – ideally 6 feet of space between riders, if not possible 3 feet with masking, assigned seating with family members sitting together.
- Busing- loading students from the back and unloading from the front.
- Classrooms- ideally at least 6 feet if distance between students, if not possible 3 feet with masking-masks remain on during class.
- *Cohorting is an effective tool for social distancing, the more you mix students the more potential you have for increased contacts if there is a case*
- When possible use visuals to aid in social distancing.
- Avoid or limit shared spaces and materials when possible.
- Limit the number of visitors to the school and limit their access to staff/students.
- If social distancing is not possible such as with a small school or very full class then it may be necessary to split the class. Need to stick to the spirit of the guidelines.

Implement Face Covering Policy

- PCHD strongly recommends masks for all students K-12. If not possible mandatory masking should be considered for at least 3-12th grades.
- Face shields are recommended for students who cannot wear masks but this would require 6 feet of social distancing.
- Must provide written justification to local health officials, upon request, explaining why a staff member is not required to wear a mask.
- *PCHD is not recommending the use of a trifold Plexiglas shield installed at a desk in place of a face covering at this time.* It is an additional surface that needs to be cleaned, provides a false sense of security, and it does not protect the individuals on the sides only in front.

- If you adopt mandatory masking, you may develop your own policy for the school district on how families can obtain a medical exemption.
- In the event a Portage County is on “RED” status, the order says schools are to follow the ODE guidance. Masking of children over 10 is strongly recommended and is a best practice.

Positive Cases, School Closures , and Virtual Learning

- Closing the school is a local decision, which will be done in consultation with the health department. The conversation needs to start with your school board and or existing school policies. The most likely scenario is there will be an COVID-19 outbreak at some point. Work on identifying the problems and implementing solutions. School closure scenarios will be handled on a case-by-case basis depending on the data that is shown and current situation with collaboration from PCHD.
- **Quarantine** is for well individuals who were a contact of a case. **Isolation** is for sick individuals who are waiting for symptoms to resolve so they are no longer infectious before returning to school or work.
- COVID-19 Testing ebbs and flows. There is a current strain on our system for adequate testing; first the strain was on supplies and now on reagents and lab capacity. Hopefully, Portage County will be able to accommodate the demands moving forward. If testing is not available schools can rely on clinical symptoms and guidance from a Primary Care Physician.
- Be aware of misconceptions such as, “I have the antibodies so I don’t need to wear mask because I had COVID-19 and can’t give it.” There have been multiple cases of individuals who have had COVID-19 disease and were re-infected after they had cleared.
- If an individual tests positive for COVID-19 there are no requirements regarding number of tests they need to take or a requirement to have a negative test. PCR tests for fragments of RNA and amplifies it. Currently, what we are concerned about is the individual infectious or not. Positive tests can be triggered by fragments of dead virus. Therefore, we are relying on COVID-19 symptoms and the current Isolation guidance. Even if you are not infectious, you can still test positive because of the fragments of the dead Coronavirus.
- Schools may require a doctor’s note for a student and/or staff to return to school from COVID-19
- The school may be asked by PCHD to provide contact information, seating charts, etc. of individuals who are considered contacts since the index case (COVID-19 Positive) may not have that info.
- An individual would need to Quarantine if they are a direct contact of the index case (COVID-19 Positive). A contact of a contact would not need to Quarantine. For example, if Student A has a parent who is positive only Student A would need to Quarantine. Student A’s classmates and teacher would not need to Quarantine.
- Schools must report any and all positive COVID-19 cases to PCHD (24/7 line 330-296-9919).
 - PCHD will determine primary contacts (more than 10-15 minutes of contact within 6 ft of someone without medical grade PPE). Because of the requirements for Isolations, often the ill person has potential to come back prior to the contacts. For a positive COVID-19 case, symptoms must resolve, a minimum of 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared and they must be without fever and no fever reducing medication for 24 hours-since last fever to return to school. Contacts must Quarantine for 14 days because they may have been just exposed and viral replication takes time.
- If there is another “Ohio shut down” teachers may able to come in to the school to broadcast lessons, but that is unknown at this time.

- Schools cannot disclose an individual’s personal health information because it is protected under HIPPA. However, a school can send information to families as long as the individual is not identified. For example, “your child may have been in contact with a person who tested positive for COVID-19”.

Notes

Portage County if moved to a “Red County” status

- Mandatory masking
- 10 years of age or less do not have to wear a mask (K-2), 3rd grade and above have to wear it
- Indoor/outdoor environment everyone required with masks
- ODE guidance
- If you engage in more risky behaviors then you must be prepared for virtual classrooms, quarantine, etc.
- Testing individuals: A person could be negative today and positive tomorrow so be careful with over testing because tomorrow is a different day.

Portage County if moved to a “Purple County” Status

- Schools and non-essential businesses may be closed-Guidance to be determined.

SCHOOL REOPENING CHECKLIST

1. Daily Symptom Assessment

- Parents or guardians must conduct an assessment of a student's health before the student leaves for school each day. Checking for common symptoms of COVID-19.
- Prepare to screen for symptoms (temps etc.) if there is an outbreak
- Identify a list of symptoms and communicate to parents
- Instruct students with any symptoms to stay home.
- If student exhibits these symptoms during the school day, make sure they are wearing a face covering, isolate until they are able to be picked up.
- Identify an isolation area for students showing symptoms during the day
- Parents who do not have a thermometer for home use should purchase one/or school provide.
- Isolation- positive for COVID-19, student/staff member should stay home for at least 10 days (may be longer)
- Quarantine -been in close contact w/ positive for COVID-19, stay home for 14 days from last exposure
- Notify the Portage County Health District immediately of positive cases

2. Cleaning and Sanitizing Buildings

- Perform frequent and routine deep cleaning procedures.
- Sanitize common, high touch surfaces in every building throughout the day.
- Minimize use of common objects, sanitize regularly after use
- An overview of all cleaning procedures and a list of cleaning materials.

3. Washing / Sanitizing Hands

- All staff and students are required to frequently wash hands and / or use hand sanitizer stations, which are available in every classroom.
- Hand washing and hand sanitizing will happen at regular intervals daily within each classroom.
- Use of common items - such as paper, books, and shared school supplies - is prohibited this school year to reduce the risk of exposure to the virus.

4. Physical Distancing

- Staggered start and end times for the K-12 school day.
- Social distancing of 6 feet recommended. If impractical, 3 ft with a mask is acceptable (AAP)
- Encourage line queues and social distancing using tape or limiting areas of use.
- Bus seating limited to/recommended one student per seat or two per seat with face coverings, ventilation, family cohorting, and strategic on/offboarding
- Classroom and learning environments throughout each building are all arranged to accommodate physical distancing for students and teachers.

5. Wearing Face Coverings

- Face coverings are strongly recommended for Grades 3-12.
- Face covering required for employees/staff, unless medically exempt
- Shields permitted for instruction with social distancing for instructional purposes (Masks are best)
- If a student or staff member is not able to wear a face covering for medical reasons, a written exemption is required for staff, recommended for students

6. Student Mobility

- Limiting crowds of students – limit mobility throughout the day to only necessary movement (i.e. bathroom use, nurse visit, etc.).
- When students arrive report directly to their classroom.

Extracurricular

- After-school activities follow the same guidelines.
- Band/Choir Indoor: (if permitted) 6ft SD, watch spit valves, recommend mask for singing
- Sports activities follow guidance issued by OHSAA and any state or local health department orders.
Limit spectators.

REVIEWED BY _____ DATE REVIEWED _____