



September 17, 2021

The Barry-Eaton District Health Department Issues Two Emergency Orders

Barry-Eaton District Health Department (BEDHD) Health Officer Colette Scrimger, MSW has issued today two emergency public health orders to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in schools and other educational settings and to foster a healthy environment for in-person learning. The emergency orders require the use of face coverings and detail quarantine and isolation procedures for schools and other educational settings in Barry and Eaton counties.

The Orders are issued pursuant to the Michigan Public Health Code (MCL 333.2451 and 333.2453, R. 325.175(4), and MCL 333.2226(d)) which authorizes public health officers to “take actions and make determinations necessary or appropriate to carry out the local health department’s functions to protect the public health and prevent disease.”

With today’s emergency orders, Barry and Eaton county school districts are mandated to follow evidence-based prevention strategies for control of the COVID-19 epidemic in schools and educational institutions.

- **(EO 2021-1)** The Education Institutions and all Persons in Educational Settings must adhere to specific isolation and quarantine measures, following identification of close contacts, household exposures, or confirmed COVID-19 cases. (<https://bit.ly/3zkVYGY>)
- **(EO 2021-2)** All Persons in Educational Settings, regardless of vaccination status, are required to consistently and properly wear a facial covering while inside any enclosed building or structure of an Educational Institution or vehicle of an Educational Institution. (<https://bit.ly/3Am5uLA>)

Ben Geiger, Chair of the Barry-Eaton District Board of Health (the governing body of BEDHD) said in a statement, “The Board of Health respects [Ms. Scrimger’s] decision and refuses to engage in divisive political theater that changes no minds and overturns no orders. For the sake of our children, our families and our public health staff, let’s move forward with respect, empathy and civility.”

Barry and Eaton counties have seen large increases in ill and quarantined school-age students. The Barry-Eaton District had a 219% increase in new cases among 0-17 year olds when comparing the two-week period of August 1-14 and the two-week period of August 29- September 11. Furthermore, children under 12 are too young to receive the vaccine and further contribute to the spread of COVID-19 in schools. As such, school districts in Barry and Eaton counties will now be mandated to follow prevention measures that are demonstrated to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

With mandatory full masking, schools will have the option to implement any of three quarantine protocols for non-household exposures less than 3 feet. 1) **No test:** Quarantine for a full 10 days from exposure, 2) **One test:** Receive a negative COVID-19 test taken on post-exposure day 6 or 7 and return on Day 8, 3) **Daily test:** If a school implements an approved testing protocol, student can attend school if they receive a negative daily rapid test. Students and staff with household exposures are required to quarantine for 10 days after the last day of exposure to the COVID-positive household member. People who are fully vaccinated are not required to quarantine.

Scientific studies overwhelmingly demonstrate the effectiveness of face coverings to prevent COVID-19 transmission. Face coverings prevent asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic infected individuals who feel well and may be unaware of their infection from spreading respiratory droplets into the air allowing other people to become infected. Face coverings trap virus-containing droplets and aerosols that are spread when an infected individual coughs, sneezes, talks, or laughs.

Both orders will be effective at midnight (12 a.m.) on Wednesday, September 22nd and will remain in place until rescinded by the Health Officer.

Statement from the Board of Health:

We live in contentious times, and there's few things more contentious today than a mask mandate for our schools. Our Health Officer Colette Scrimger and I had spirited discussions about the necessity for a mask mandate. Despite my views, I always reiterated this is a difficult decision, and was hers and hers alone to make.

Ms. Scrimger has made her decision, and state law does not allow it to be overturned by local county commissioners. Accordingly, the Board of Health respects her decision and refuses to engage in divisive political theater that changes no minds and overturns no orders. For the sake of our children, our families and our public health staff, let's move forward with respect, empathy and civility.

Commissioner Ben Geiger
Chair, Barry Eaton District Board of Health