



September 14, 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians,

The Ottawa County Department of Public Health (OCDPH) has been informed that as early as Monday, September 14, 2020, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) will begin reporting COVID-19 outbreaks at schools throughout Michigan, and they'll be updating the information weekly on their website at www.michigan.gov/coronavirus. The outbreaks can involve staff or students who attend in-person learning or participate in before or after school activities. Outbreaks will be removed from the MDHHS weekly report when 14 or more days have passed without any new cases. If published today, the MDHHS outbreak report will contain one outbreak at an Ottawa County K-12th school. This outbreak has just two cases who were in close contact with one another at a before-school activity in August before the start of classes. These cases did not have any close contacts among staff or students at that school, and no new school cases have been linked to them.

The word outbreak can be alarming, so it is important to understand the context. A COVID-19 outbreak is defined by MDHHS as two or more cases among students or staff within a 14-day period who are epidemiologically linked, do not share a household, and were not identified as close contacts of each other in another setting during standard case investigation or contact tracing. The risk of exposure to COVID-19 is widespread in our communities and cases at school may often be unrelated to any exposure at school.

Each school district continues to work closely with OCDPH to quickly identify all cases and close contacts and communicate with families to ensure we minimize the size of any outbreaks, should they occur. Your school district will communicate with you about an outbreak related to your child's school. Additionally, school districts are working with the OCDPH to create a public dashboard of cases currently in isolation and contacts currently in quarantine. More information about how to access this dashboard will be provided within the next week or two.

While we place a high priority on providing students with quality education, we can only succeed by valuing the health and safety of our students, staff and families. That can best be achieved when we work together to box in the coronavirus so it has little chance to spread further by staying six feet or more away from those outside our households, wearing face coverings when in public, practicing exceptional hygiene at all times and isolating and quarantining those who have been exposed. By working together, we can have a successful 2020-2021 school year.

For more information about the spread of COVID-19 in Ottawa County, view the OCDPH dashboard at www.miOttawa.org/coronavirus. Use the right and left arrows at the bottom of the dashboard to navigate through the pages. Also, visit this website to learn more about how schools work with the health department when there is a case of COVID-19 among a student or staff member.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Paul A. Heidel". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Paul A. Heidel, MD, MPH
Medical Director
Ottawa County Department of Public Health