



HEALTH
Department



KALAMAZOO COUNTY GOVERNMENT

In the Pursuit of Extraordinary Governance

Health and Community Services Department

JOINT NEWS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Allegan and Kalamazoo Counties Issue Orders for Educational Settings

Two Southwest Michigan counties – Allegan and Kalamazoo– issue an order for their respective jurisdictions to control and prevent COVID-19 transmission in educational settings.

The two counties issue their orders pursuant to the Michigan Public Health Code, MCL 333.2451 and 333.2453, as well as R. 325.175(4), which is an administrative rule promulgated by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services pursuant to MCL 333.2226(d). Details of each order is included below:

Allegan County

The Allegan County order requires that within educational institutions children in kindergarten through grade six must consistently and properly wear a facial mask covering both nose and mouth while inside any enclosed building or structure of the institution. The order also requires all persons, regardless of vaccination status, providing services to any child in kindergarten through grade six, and all persons providing services to students identified as medically fragile regardless of age, properly and consistently wear a face mask while inside any enclosed building or structure of the institution.

The order is effective immediately and remains in effect until six weeks past the date the COVID-19 vaccine is authorized and available to persons age five years through age eleven or until further notice from the Health Officer.

Kalamazoo County

The Kalamazoo County order requires that within educational institutions children in kindergarten through grade six must consistently and properly wear a facial mask covering both nose and mouth while inside any enclosed building or structure of the institution. The order also requires all persons, regardless of vaccination status, providing services to any child in kindergarten through grade six, and all persons providing services to students identified as medically fragile regardless of age, properly and consistently wear a face mask while inside any enclosed building or structure of the institution.

The order is effective immediately and remains in effect until six weeks past the date the COVID-19 vaccine is authorized and available to persons age five years through age eleven or until further notice from the Health Officer.

The most effective way to prevent transmission in schools is to support being vaccinated. Achieving high levels of COVID-19 vaccination among eligible students, as well as teachers, staff, and household members, is the most critical strategy to help schools stay open safely. Students younger than 12 years of age are currently ineligible to receive the vaccination. Therefore, the best protection strategy against COVID-19 that is available to this population are face masks. Face masks in schools are safe, essential, and a proven strategy to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in school settings. In addition to personal protection, a face mask captures exhaled respiratory droplets and aerosols that may contain the virus from being breathed in by others. Given the virus can spread from infected people who do not appear sick, masks remain essential. In addition to masks and vaccination, a layered protection strategy helps ensure a healthy learning environment, allowing students the best chance to remain healthy and physically present in the classroom setting.

Allegan and Kalamazoo County health departments continue to support the recommendations from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS), the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Academy of Family Physicians for indoor face masks for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors to K-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status. Both county health departments also support the CDC and MDHHS recommendations that everyone – fully vaccinated and unvaccinated – wear a mask indoors in public if in an area of substantial or high community transmission.

Resources:

- CDC Scientific Brief on Cloth Masks to Control the Spread of SARS-CoV-2:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/science/science-briefs/masking-science-sars-cov2.html>
- The ABC Science Collaborative findings from June 2021, prior to Delta Variant circulating in Michigan, determined, "masking is an effective strategy to prevent within-school transmission when COVID-19 is circulating and when vaccination is not yet available for all children."
<https://abcsciencecollaborative.org/year-in-review-path-forward/>
- American Academy of Pediatrics:
<https://www.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/covid-19-planning-considerations-return-to-in-person-education-in-schools/>

For more information about COVID-19:

Allegan County

Visit www.allegancounty.org/covid or call 269-673-5411.

Kalamazoo County

Visit www.kalcounty.com/covid19 or call 269-373-5200.

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Kalamazoo County

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