

Notes from the desk of Howard Parmentier, MAS Superintendent.

I hope that this letter finds you and all of your family members safe and healthy. These certainly are challenging times and as we get closer to the opening of our schools, I wanted to share some information with you. I have been meeting with our local health department and I wanted to share a few misconceptions that I am hearing from parents and community members. The following information comes from Public Health of Delta and Menominee Counties and the LMAS District Health Department.

All of the local health departments in the Upper Peninsula are working together to ensure that they are providing schools with consistent guidance. Please see the following responses to frequently asked questions health departments have been receiving.

First and foremost, while isolation and quarantine are often used interchangeably, and both mean to stay away from others for a designed time period, they are actually not the same. Someone who tests positive for COVID-19 must ISOLATE themselves from others. Someone who is identified as a close contact to a positive case must QUARANTINE.

Close contacts are currently defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as anyone who has been within 6 feet of a positive case for 15 minutes or more. Any close contacts of the positive case will be required to quarantine for 14 days since the last exposure to that person.

If the case is a student that tests positive for COVID:

- Siblings and parents will need to quarantine if they are living in the same household.
- Any student and staff who meet close contact criteria will need to quarantine.
- If there is a likelihood of close contacts within a group (e.g., a kindergarten classroom), and they cannot be identified individually, the whole group **may** need to quarantine.
- Contacts of close contacts (e.g., the classmates of the siblings of a positive case) will NOT need to quarantine.

Positive cases will isolate for approximately 10 days. The Health Department will notify the case of the specific isolation period and the criteria that need to be met to discontinue home isolation. Further, close contacts of positive cases will be required to quarantine for 14 days after the last exposure to the positive case. It is important to note that , in some instances, quarantine periods may extend beyond 14 days. For example:

A student is identified as a positive case and has a mom and two siblings living in the same house. The student meets the criteria to end home isolation and is cleared to return to school after 10 days. Mom and siblings have been in quarantine those 10 days due to being in close contact with the positive case AND they have been continuing to live in the same household. Day 1 of the 14-day quarantine period for mom and siblings BEGINS the day the positive case is released from home isolation. In this example, mom and siblings will quarantine for 24 total days, provided they do not become positive cases during that time.

Regarding Students:

It is recommended you screen students daily before arrival to school. The CDC does not currently recommend universal symptom screenings (screening of all students prior to entering school) due to time constraints and interruptions to education. Parents or caregivers are strongly encouraged to monitor their children for signs of infectious illness every day prior to sending students to school.

Student Screening

Before leaving for school, please make sure screening takes place.

Section One: Symptoms

- Temperature 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher when taken by mouth
- Sore throat
- **New** uncontrolled cough that causes difficulty breathing (for students with chronic allergic/asthmatic cough, a change in their cough from baseline)
- Diarrhea, vomiting, or abdominal pain
- New onset of severe headache, especially with a fever

If your child has any of the above symptoms, a possible illness exists and that may decrease the student's ability to learn and put them at risk for spreading illness to others.

Section Two: Close Contact/Potential Exposure

In the past 14 days has your child:

- Had close contact (within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes) with a person with confirmed COVID-19; OR
- Had close contact (within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes) with person under quarantine for possible exposure to COVID-19; OR

If the answer is **YES** to any of the questions in Section One, but **NO** to all the questions in Section Two, keep your child(ren) home from school until the following are fulfilled: for fever: at least 24 hours have passed with no fever, without the use of fever-reducing medications; sore throat/ cough: improvement (if strep throat: do not return until at least 2 doses of antibiotic have been taken); diarrhea, vomiting, abdominal pain: no diarrhea or vomiting for 24 hours; severe headache: improvement in headache.

If the answer is **YES** to any of the questions in Section One AND **YES** to any of the questions in Section Two Call your healthcare provider right away to get evaluated and tested for COVID-19. If you don't have one or cannot be seen, go to www.mi.gov/coronavirustest or call 2-1-1 to find a location to have your child(ren) tested for COVID-19. If the answer is **YES** to any of the symptom questions, but **NO** to any close contact/potential exposure questions, your student may return based on the guidance for their symptoms (see "[Managing Communicable Diseases in Schools](#)"):

- Fever: at least 24 hours have passed with no fever, without the use of fever-reducing medications
- Sore throat: improvement (if strep throat: do not return until at least 2 doses of antibiotic have been taken);
- Cough/Shortness of breath: improvement
- Diarrhea, vomiting, abdominal pain: no diarrhea or vomiting for 24 hours
- Severe headache: improvement

****Please note that if there are situations that arise at school, school officials will work with the health department to ensure the proper protocols are being adhered to.****