



SCHOOL MITIGATION STRATEGIES TO PREVENT SPREAD OF COVID-19

Michigan.gov/Coronavirus

April 9, 2021

Data Summary:

As of April 3, 2021, the three key metrics used to determine how fast COVID-19 is spreading in Michigan are all increasing.

- **Percent positivity** has increased to 15.6% statewide and is increasing in all regions.
- **Case Rates** are up 375% from the mid-February low.
- **COVID hospitalizations** have increased over the past four weeks with percent of inpatient beds occupied by individuals with COVID up 203% from the mid-February low.

Those impacted by the recent surge of cases are different than in April and the fall of 2020. Previously, seniors were disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 and outbreaks were most common in long-term care facilities. However, over the past month both case increases and the number of cases have been the highest among younger individuals with those aged 20-29 and 30-39 experiencing the highest case rates today. Currently, more than 775 children aged 0-19 years are infected with COVID-19 every day in Michigan.

Cases are more common in younger Michiganders and outbreaks are the most prevalent in K-12 settings.

- Case rates for children 0-9 and 10-19 are at an all-time high and are more than quadruple from a month ago.
- For the week ending April 1st, the number of reported outbreaks increased from 248 to 301 in K-12 settings.

Given the dramatic increase of COVID-19 cases in younger Michiganders, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services recommends that local health departments and school districts take additional mitigation strategies to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Beginning April 12, 2021 MDHHS strongly recommends schools take the following mitigation measures for the next two weeks:

- 1) Remote learning for high school students.
- 2) Pause all youth sports.

Despite careful planning and consistent implementation of prevention strategies, some situations may lead school officials to consider temporarily closing schools or parts of a school (such as a class, cohort, or grade level) to in-person instruction, typically in consultation with the local health department. Refer to Unplanned Closures in CDC's [Operational Strategy for K-12 Schools through Phased Prevention](#) for considerations:

- Classrooms, cohorts, or schools experiencing uncontrolled spread of COVID-19 may temporarily close for in-person learning.
- Schools in areas experiencing rapid or persistent rises in COVID-19 case rates or severe burden on health care capacity.

Example from Ingham County Health Department:

[Ingham County Health Department strongly recommends remote learning for grades 6-12 next week to prevent COVID-19 spread](#)

With COVID-19 cases high and many students traveling this week for spring break, the Ingham County Health Department is strongly recommending that local schools avoid in-person instruction for students in grades 6-12 for the week of April 12.

Example from Detroit Public Schools Community District (DPSCD)

[Special Announcement: DPSCD Return from Spring Break](#)

Due to Detroit's extraordinarily high seven-day COVID-19 infection rate, DPSCD added an additional week of virtually only learning. This equates to two weeks of virtual learning post spring break.

For the remainder of the school year MDHHS recommends that schools take the following mitigation measures:

1) Implement a school testing program

MDHHS will distribute rapid antigen test kits to any Pre-K-12 school in Michigan free of charge through the [MI Safe Schools COVID Testing Program](#). The MI Safe Schools testing program is a voluntary program to offer weekly testing to educators and staff to reduce risk associated with in-person school operations. MDHHS will provide training, guidance, and rapid antigen testing materials to schools who sign up and agree to the program requirements.

Recent improvements to the program include a ***streamlined reporting function*** to report individual-level data only for positive antigen tests to keep administrative workload low.

2) Reduce gathering sizes and practice consistent social distancing

The risk of virus transmission is increased by the number of individuals a person physically interacts with, as well as the intensity and duration of that interaction. Schools can reduce the risk of COVID-19 spread by lowering the number of students in larger common area settings like lunchrooms, athletics, and assemblies. Social distancing should be maintained, masking should be consistent, and outdoor spaces can be utilized.

Guidance and examples to reduce risk:

- [State of Michigan Guidelines for Operating Schools Safely](#)
- [CDC Operational Strategy for K-12 Schools through Phased Prevention](#)
- [CDC K-12 Schools COVID-19 Mitigation Toolkit](#)
- [Managing Communicable Diseases in Schools](#)
- [COVID-19 Information and Resources for Athletics](#)

3) Help students 16 years of age and older, parents, and staff get vaccinated

All Michiganders age 16 and older are eligible to receive a vaccination. You can sign up to get the safe, effective vaccine at Michigan.gov/COVIDVaccine.

- Check the website of your [local health department](#) or hospital to find out their process or for registration forms; or
- Check additional vaccination sites, such as local pharmacies like [Meijer](#), [Rite Aid](#), [Kroger](#), [Walmart](#) (Mid/Central and Northern MI), [Snyder Drugs](#) (U.P. residents), or use the [CDC Vaccine Finder Tool](#); or
- Residents who don't have access to the internet or who need assistance navigating the vaccine scheduling process can call the COVID-19 Hotline at 888-535-6136 (press 1) Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

[COVID-19 Vaccine Toolkit for School Settings and Childcare Programs](#)

4) Consistent implementation of layered prevention strategies to reduce SARS-CoV-2 transmission in schools

Regardless of the level of community transmission, **it is critical that schools use and layer prevention strategies**. Five key prevention strategies are essential to safe delivery of in-person instruction and help to prevent COVID-19 transmission in schools:

1. Universal and correct use of [masks](#)
2. [Physical distancing](#)
3. [Handwashing and respiratory etiquette](#)
4. [Cleaning](#) and maintaining healthy facilities
5. [Contact tracing](#) in combination with isolation and quarantine