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PERSONAL HEALTH DIVISION

For Immediate Release

November 10, 2021

Health Department amends K-12 mask order

Effective Tuesday, Nov. 9, the Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department released the [First Amended Order](#) to update and amend requirements from the original K-12 School Masking Order.

In response to feedback and questions raised during ongoing regular meetings between school leadership and health department officials, certain amendments were made. The majority of the Original Order, issued August 27 requiring universal masking in grades K-12 within the two-county jurisdiction of Benzie and Leelanau counties, is still in place. Modifications fall into three main areas:

1. The amended order exempts students and officials/referees while actively engaged in sports practice or competition and performing arts practice and performance from wearing a mask if they participate in a testing program described in the [Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department Athletics and Performing Arts Guidance](#) where wearing of a mask would be unsafe or interfere with the ability to perform.
2. The amended order provides a clearer definition of an appropriate face mask or facial covering.
3. The amended order exempts residential schools from the order if they are operating under a written mitigation plan approved by the Health Officer.

Health Officer Lisa Peacock and Medical Director Dr. Josh Meyerson released the amended orders after several consultations with school superintendents and other leaders and following communications with Board of Health members.

“After studying pertinent data and consulting with school superintendents, the amendments were made to reflect case counts, transmission rates, and changes made to the Michigan High School Athletics Association COVID-19 guidelines,” Peacock and Dr. Meyerson stated. “The Order as amended allows students to safely participate in athletics and performing arts,” they added.

Health officials continue to monitor disease trends and the availability of a vaccine for all school-aged children as they plan a path forward to support schools not only with guidance involving COVID-19 transmission, but any other communicable disease.

According to health department officials, the region is reporting a high level of COVID-19 case transmissions with school-age cases a large percentage of reported cases.

Although children are at a lower risk of becoming severely ill with COVID-19 compared with adults, children can:

- Be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19
- Get very sick from COVID-19
- Have both short and long-term health complications from COVID-19
- Spread COVID-19 to others

Getting vaccinated is the best way to stop the spread of COVID-19 in schools and the community. The Health Department hosts clinics especially geared toward children 5 to 11 years old. These separate clinics will accommodate children in numerous ways, including allowing parents to comfort their child by having them sit on their laps and be more intimate, and smaller than clinics held for adults.

A parent/guardian must accompany anyone younger than 18 to a COVID-19 clinic. Please bring an insurance card to the appointment.

To schedule an appointment exclusively for children 5 to 11 years old, [click here](#). To schedule an appointment for anyone 10 and older, [click here](#). Anyone may call the Michigan COVID-19 hotline at 888-535-6136 if they have questions or are not able to find a time or date that works for them and/or their child.

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