

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 18, 2021

### **Universal Masking Recommendations for all Marshall County Schools**

Marshall County has seen a substantial increase in positive COVID 19 cases in our county over the past few weeks. Our MCHD Lifeplex COVID 19 testing site has also seen increasing numbers of ill individuals seeking testing. Area hospitals are starting to see the strain of ill individuals presenting for needed treatment. Some nearby counties are currently on diversion, sending ill patients elsewhere for care. Marshall County is trending in the wrong direction.

According to the CDC Covid Data Tracker, Indiana and Marshall County are in **the RED zone**. This indicates that the **transmissibility is HIGH**. Keeping Marshall County Students in school with in-person learning has been a high priority for MCHD. Last year, Marshall County was fortunate to be able to keep children in school and mitigate the transmission of COVID 19 in our community. Because of the current surge, and what the MCHD is seeing at our test site, and the increase in positive cases in our county, the following guidance is **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED for ALL MARSHALL COUNTY SCHOOLS**:

- 1. Due to the circulating and highly contagious Delta variant, MCHD is recommending universal indoor masking by all students (age 2 and older), staff, teachers, and visitors to K-12 schools regardless of vaccination status.**
- 2. Testing, ventilation, handwashing, and respiratory etiquette, staying home when sick and getting tested, contact tracing in combination with quarantine and isolation, and cleaning and disinfection are also important layers of prevention to keep schools safe.**
- 3. Students, teachers, and staff should stay home when they have signs of any infectious illness and be referred for testing and to their healthcare provider for further care.**
- 4. Schools serve children under the age of 12 who are currently not eligible for vaccination. Therefore, these recommendations emphasize implementing a layered prevention strategy to protect students, teachers, staff, visitors, and other member of their households who may be detrimentally affected by COVID 19. These strategies will support in-person learning.**
- 5. These recommended guidelines should remain in effect until Marshall County returns to the BLUE ZONE per the CDC Covid Data Tracker.**

MCHD does not want to close schools. Education of our children is of utmost importance. However, if absenteeism rates surge, action will have to ensue. MCHD is asking the community to come together and help decrease the spread of COVID 19. These same principals could also be beneficial and used throughout the community, not just in schools.

MCHD will continue to monitor the present situation and make recommendations for a safe and healthier Marshall County.

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Dr. Byron Holm MD

Marshall County Health Officer