



ST. JOSEPH COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

St. Joseph County Department of Health

"Promoting physical and mental health and facilitating the prevention of disease, injury and disability for all St. Joseph County residents"

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Guidance for K-12 Schools, Fall 2021

In light of the level of community transmission of SARS-CoV-2, the virus which causes COVID-19, and current vaccination rates in St. Joseph County, the St. Joseph County Department of Health urges all area K-12 schools to endorse the guidance for COVID-19 prevention in K-12 schools issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Indiana Department of Health. Specifically, CDC calls for universal indoor masking of all K-12 students, faculty, staff, and visitors, regardless of vaccination status.

CDC and the Indiana Department of Health both consider the cases per 100,000 population and the percent positivity of COVID tests, both measured over a 7-day period, in assessing the level of community transmission. However, the Indiana Department of Health uses higher thresholds than CDC in assessing risk and calculates an average risk score based on these two factors, while CDC assigns transmission risk based on the highest level for either factor. Further, CDC updates their assessment daily, while the Indiana Department of Health updates their color-coded metrics once per week (on Wednesdays, reflecting data as of the previous Sunday). The current case rate in St. Joseph County is 84 cases per 100,000 population over the past week. CDC defines substantial transmission as 50-99.9 cases per 100,000 population in a week.

Another factor influencing our recommendation is the underlying vaccination rate in the county and specifically in the K-12 school population. No one under age 12 is yet eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine, and less than 25% of individuals ages 12-18 years in St. Joseph County are fully vaccinated. Therefore, the overwhelming majority of individuals in K-12 classrooms in St. Joseph County this fall will not have been vaccinated.

St. Joseph County health officials additionally recommend that all K-12 schools follow current CDC recommendations regarding physical distancing, contact tracing, testing, quarantine and isolation (as appropriate depending on vaccination status).

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