



Erie County Health Department
An Accredited Public Health Department

Erie County Community Health Center
A Federally Qualified Health Center

Peter T. Schade, MPH, RS
Health Commissioner



MEMO

To: Erie County School Administrators
From: Peter T. Schade – Erie County Health Commissioner
CC: Erie County Board of Health
Date: September 3, 2020
Re: Indicators Used to Determine Recommendation for Return to In-Person Classes

The Erie County Health Department is closely monitoring incidence of COVID-19 cases in Erie County to make recommendations to local school districts on when to return to in-person classes. Based on multiple indicators, the recommendation was made on August 5th, 2020 that all Erie County school districts should implement a plan for virtual education of students for the first academic quarter of the 2020-2021 school year, through approximately October 30th, 2020.

The Erie County Health Department will recommend Erie County school districts return to in-person classes when **all** of the following criteria are met:

New cases per capita are fewer than 50 cases per 100,000 residents for at least 28 days.

- This measure considers how many new cases have occurred relative to the population of Erie County. More cases means a greater potential for spread among individuals living in Erie County, and contributes to the overall risk level.
- Fifty cases per population of 100,000 is the cutoff between areas of moderate incidence and moderately high incidence as defined by the CDC.
- The period of 28 days is the length of two full incubation periods for the virus. This period of 28 days can be expected to confirm the interruption of human-to-human transmission.

The proportion of cases that are not in a congregate setting is less than 50% for at least 28 days.

- This measure is used as an indicator of greater risk of community spread. Congregate settings for this indicator are defined as long-term care facilities (including nursing homes) and prisons.
- Individuals who reside in congregate settings are generally not viewed as a transmission risk to the broader community. As such, people with COVID-19 not residing in a congregate setting carry greater weight in the risk analysis since they are more likely to interact with others in the broader community.
- The period of 28 days is the length of two full incubation periods for the virus. This period of 28 days can be expected to confirm the interruption of human-to-human transmission.

Healthcare seeking behavior does not experience a sustained increase for at least 28 days.

- Syndromic surveillance is a common public health tool for early detection and characterization of disease trends by looking at early warning indicators before confirmed diagnosis or more serious disease outcomes can be detected.
- Healthcare seeking behavior includes Emergency Department visits, outpatient visits for COVID-like illness, and the purchase of over-the-counter cold and flu medications.

- A sustained increase is defined as an increasing trend in the number of visits to the Emergency Department or an outpatient healthcare provider with symptoms of COVID-like illness or a diagnosis of COVID-19, and/or an increasing trend of at least five consecutive days of purchases of over-the-counter cold and flu medications which exceed the statistically significant threshold.
- Only individuals with COVID-like symptoms who are not diagnosed with another respiratory illness are included in this measure.
- These indicators provide information on the healthcare seeking behavior of the population and a sense of how concerned residents are about their current health status and the virus.

The Health Commissioner receives a report of the listed indicators from the Ohio Department of Health every Thursday. As the local public health agency, the Erie County Health Department makes recommendations to local school districts based on the current data to provide guidance aimed at protecting the health and safety of the greater community. The Erie County Health Department is working with all local school districts to implement an absentee reporting system which will facilitate the reporting of school absentee rates to our agency. School absentee rates will be considered when making future recommendations for schools.

Schools in which the Erie County Health Department provides school nursing services have the ability to conduct PCR testing on symptomatic students (with permission from parents) or staff as a means of streamlining the testing process for families, rapidly identifying positive cases to mitigate continued community spread, and returning uninfected students/staff to class in a timely manner. Schools where nursing services are not provided by the Erie County Health Department may contact the Erie County Community Health Center to schedule a same day appointment for PCR testing of symptomatic students or staff.