



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 Schools Administrators
From: Peter T. Schade – Erie County Health Commissioner
CC: Erie County Board of Health
Date: October 19, 2020
Re: COVID-19 Update for School Administrators

In the beginning of August, the Erie County Board of Health recommended all K-12 Erie County schools participate in virtual learning to start the 2020-2021 school year based on the increase of COVID-19 cases throughout the county. At the time, Erie County was at a Level 3 (Red) alert under the Ohio Public Health Advisory System, which indicates very high exposure and spread. The total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in July was 290. Many of these cases were due to multiple Erie County long-term care facility outbreaks that spread to households and contributed to community spread.

Since the beginning of September, Erie County has remained at a Level 2 (Orange) alert under the Ohio Public Health Advisory System. However, multiple indicators are now steering the county toward returning to a Level 3 (Red) alert. In just the first two weeks of October, Erie County has already seen 135 confirmed COVID-19 cases. The majority of these cases are attributed to community spread, as evidenced by most individuals being unaware of a COVID-19 exposure prior to their own symptom onset and test results. Household and community spread have been the major contributing factors to the recent increase in COVID-19 cases, with minimal spread throughout Erie County long-term care facilities.

The recent rise in case numbers indicates increasing threat levels. This data must be analyzed frequently to show a trend in one direction or another. At this time, schools are urged to be extra vigilant in their plans to open 5 days a week. Following the preventive measures during “up-ticks” in case counts and community spread is the best way to keep the virus from becoming an outbreak situation.

With this data in mind, the Erie County Board of Health urges local school districts to follow these preventive measures:

- Require the use of face masks for all students and staff, except where exemptions apply.
- Practice appropriate handwashing.
- Clean and sanitize frequently touched surfaces regularly.
- Enforce social distancing of at least six feet.
- Monitor the health of all students and staff, and immediately exclude those with symptoms of COVID-19.

The Erie County Board of Health will continue to issue a Weekly COVID Report every Thursday. For the most up-to-date local data, visit [CovidErieOhio.com](https://www.coviderieohio.com).

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