



Nov 20, 2020

Good afternoon,

The health and safety of our staff and students remains our top priority. Today, the Kent County Health Department issued a public health warning and series of recommendations to curb the spread of COVID-19. The public health warning, developed in conjunction with the Kent Intermediate School District, **recommends high schools remain virtual until January 15** and that additional mitigation steps be taken for those communities still serving elementary and middle school students with in-person learning.

Caledonia High School will follow the recommendation and remain virtual until January 15 to help mitigate the spread of the virus after the holiday season and help to eventually get back to in-person learning and athletics for all of our students. Maintaining virtual learning through the end of the semester for our high school students will cause the least disruption and allow students to focus on their studies and exams.

The following press release was issued by the Kent County Health Dept. this afternoon and includes links to the full list of related recommendations, including measures to be taken to protect our elementary and middle school students. Over the next several days, we will be reviewing our procedures to make sure that we are in compliance with the new guidelines that were provided this afternoon.

We will continue to keep our CCS community aware of any changes and encourage everyone to be safe and do your part to curb the spread of the coronavirus over the coming weeks.

Sincerely,

Dr. Dedrick Martin

## Kent County Health Department Issues Public Health Warning

***New recommendations are designed to stem skyrocketing COVID-19 infection rates***

***GRAND RAPIDS, MICH. (November 20, 2020)*** – Dr. Adam London, administrative health officer at the Kent County Health Department, has issued a public health warning and strong

guidelines aimed at curbing community-wide spread of the coronavirus in Kent County and preventing another economic shutdown.

With more than 650 new cases per day and positivity rates holding well above 15% – the highest local rates since the onset of the pandemic – the Kent County Health Department and area hospitals report that conditions threaten their ability to provide services essential for the health of the community.

“Our local infection rates have reached dangerous levels,” said London. “We need to take decisive, community-wide action to protect the health of our residents and to alleviate the pressure on our hospitals, frontline healthcare workers and public health case investigators and contact tracers.”

Acknowledging severe delays in the contact tracing process due to the current high rate of infection, the new guidelines outline steps the public should take if they test positive, have symptoms or suspect they have had contact with someone infected with COVID-19. They also guide employers in best practices for allowing employees to return from work following isolation or quarantine.

The warning advises against indoor residential gatherings of people from multiple households, including over the holidays. Guidelines urge businesses to strictly adhere to workplace protocols and encourage the public to support local businesses using pickup and delivery whenever possible, minimizing time spent inside public spaces. **K-8 schools are reminded to diligently follow face covering, distancing and health screening guidelines. Expanding on the current Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) orders, high schools are advised to continue remote learning through January 15, 2021. Parents are cautioned to prevent children from gathering with friends outside of school hours and during periods of remote learning.** Houses of worship are encouraged to temporarily discontinue large in-person gatherings. Finally, sports and recreational activities not covered by the current MDHHS order and that require close contact are also not advised at this time.

Business leaders from manufacturing, retail, and other industries, along with area chambers and economic development organizations weighed in on steps to slow the spread of the virus while keeping businesses open.

The Kent County COVID-19 Church Task Force has met weekly with leaders from the health department since the first documented case of COVID-19 in March. This week, the Task Force announced that more than 60 faith leaders committed to limit in-person gatherings at area houses of worship to help reduce the spread of the virus.

Finally, Kent Intermediate School District officials and a coalition of K12 superintendents from across the county worked with the department to finalize recommendations that affect area schools, athletics, students, and families.

London thanked public and private sector partners for joining in this urgent call to action.

“We commend area leaders and organizations **who have joined in support of the recommendations,**” he said. “In addition to protecting public health, they know that tighter measures now may help stave off another round of public health ‘stay home’ orders that shutter businesses and schools in the coming months.”

To read today’s Kent County Public Health Warning and related recommendations, go to: [https://www.accesskent.com/Health/pdf/COVID-19/Public\\_Health\\_Warning\\_112020.pdf](https://www.accesskent.com/Health/pdf/COVID-19/Public_Health_Warning_112020.pdf) for English or [https://www.accesskent.com/Health/pdf/COVID-19/Public\\_Health\\_Warning\\_112020\\_es.pdf](https://www.accesskent.com/Health/pdf/COVID-19/Public_Health_Warning_112020_es.pdf) for Spanish.

### **Health Warning Language Regarding Elementary, Middle and High School:**

[https://www.accesskent.com/Health/pdf/COVID-19/Public\\_Health\\_Warning\\_112020.pdf](https://www.accesskent.com/Health/pdf/COVID-19/Public_Health_Warning_112020.pdf)

*The education of our young people is also essential for the wellbeing of the community. The information we have currently indicates that younger students are less effective transmitters of coronavirus than high school students. Additionally, these younger students are not as well equipped to be successful in a remote learning model. Therefore, elementary education may remain in-person with universal facial covering policies, daily symptom screenings of all students and staff, and six (6) feet of physical separation between seated students to the maximum extent possible (but never less than 3 feet between seated students). Middle school education may remain in-person with universal facial covering policies, daily symptom screenings of all students and staff, and by reducing the number of students in the classroom through remote instruction or hybrid to provide six (6) feet of physical separation between seated students to the maximum extent possible (but never less than three (3) feet between seated students). High schools are recommended to remain in a remote educational model through January 15, 2021. COVID-19 outbreaks and illnesses happen more frequently in the high school grades. This population may also effectively expose others to coronavirus even if not demonstrating the symptoms of illness themselves. High school programs serving special needs populations, students with cognitive disabilities, and center-based programs may continue with caution. The KCHD will make recommendations about schools and related activities after January 15, 2021 using the science and understanding that is available at that time.*