



Public Information Release

Updated Public Health Advisories and Orders

December 2, 2020

The Madison County Board of Health voted to rescind two previous orders that closed school buildings and suspended sports and extracurricular activities. In place of the orders, the Board issued two public health advisories recommending the same actions. The Board also passed an order to suspend community festivals, events, and gatherings until January 1, 2021.

The first public health advisory was issued to all schools in Madison County recommending that they close their school buildings until January 1, 2021 due to the high incidence of COVID-19 in the county. Schools that remain open must meet the six (6) foot social distancing rule between students/staff not of the same household and follow all other local and state safety operational guidelines.

A second public health advisory was issued to all schools, sports teams, and related organizations in Madison County recommending that they suspend all school sports, club sports, travel sports, league sports, school extracurriculars, and school activities until January 1, 2021 due to the high incidence of COVID-19 in the county. Sports and extracurriculars that continue must meet all local and state safety operational guidelines.

The Board also passed an order suspending all community festivals, events and gatherings until January 1, 2021. They also delegated the final decision authority on event suspension to the Health Commissioner during this time.

Madison County has been at Level 3 (red) and experiencing high incidence of COVID-19 spread on the Ohio Public Health Advisory System (OPHAS) for two months. The county is on a path this week to be placed on the watch list, by the Ohio Department of Health, for escalating to Level 4 (purple) indicating severe risk to the health and safety of the county from COVID-19. Transmission of COVID-19 in Madison County is very high and there are no indications that new infection rates will slow without additional interventions.

Madison County Health Commissioner Chris Cook explained that the level of transmission in the county is substantial and uncontrolled and “requires significant mitigation strategies for the entire community.” Cook said Madison County’s new case incidence is the highest it has ever been during the pandemic and is even outpacing Franklin County right now. Franklin County has been at Level 4 (purple) on the OPHAS for two weeks. He also noted that the winter holidays have the potential to drive exponential growth in cases in the county. “I’m beyond worried about where we are headed over the coming weeks and the healthcare system’s ability to keep up,” Cook said. “Something has to change. Our hope is that everyone takes these advisories seriously.”

Board of Health President Teresa Ames encouraged everyone to take three important steps right now. “Wear your mask, distance yourself from others, and don’t gather with people outside your own household,” Ames said. “We need this now more than ever.”

Chris Cook, MPH, RS
Health Commissioner

Dr. James Kaehr, MD
Medical Director

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Our Mission
We are committed to monitoring and responding to our community's health and wellness needs through innovative services, education, collaboration, and compassionate care.



Public Health Advisory

Madison County Schools

December 2, 2020

Madison County continues to be directly affected by a pandemic from the spread of a contagious, infectious disease, SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19), which endangers the health, safety, and welfare of all residents and poses a significant threat to the healthcare infrastructure in the Central Ohio region. The county as a whole is in a highly vulnerable position as cases are increasing without effective means of control. Madison County Public Health has a responsibility to provide the community with information so that both leaders and residents can make good choices for their health and for the community's health.

The Madison County Board of Health and the Health Commissioner recommend all schools in Madison County close their school buildings, and thus use remote learning modalities, until at least January 1, 2021 due to the high incidence of COVID-19 throughout the county and the potential for exponential growth in the coming weeks that may fracture the ability of the healthcare system to provide care to not only COVID-19 patients but all those who are in need of care. *Schools that remain open must meet the six (6) foot social distancing rule between students/staff not of the same household and follow all other local and state safety operational guidelines.*

MCPH describes the current context of the pandemic for school decision-making as follows:

- At least 1,730 residents of Madison County have tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus (COVID-19).
- 19 residents of Madison County have died from COVID-19.
- During the prior two weeks, 335 residents of Madison County have been newly diagnosed with COVID-19 at a rate of 748 cases per 100,000 residents, the highest at any time during the pandemic.
- Madison County has been at Level 3 (red) and experiencing high incidence of COVID-19 spread on the Ohio Public Health Advisory System (OPHAS) for two months.
- Madison County is on a path this week to be placed on the watch list, by the Ohio Department of Health, for escalating to Level 4 (purple) indicating severe risk to the health and safety of the county from COVID-19.



- Transmission of COVID-19 in Madison County is very high and there are no indications that the rate of spread will slow without other interventions.
- During the prior two weeks cases of COVID-19 in Madison County schools have increased by 400% and quarantined students and staff have increased by 300%.
- During the prior two months 47% all new cases of COVID-19 recorded in Madison County have been students, school staff, or people who have reported close contact with students in the two weeks prior to the onset of illness.
- Madison County has triggered core and secondary indicators and thresholds for risk of introduction and transmission of COVID-19 in schools.¹
- In-person schools can increase transmission risk in communities where transmission is already high.²
- In-person schooling should be reconsidered in the context of local pandemic conditions, especially during times of widespread community transmission, high case incidence, high testing positivity rates, or overburdened case and contact tracing systems.³
- Interventions such as closing school buildings slowed overall community spread in the early stages of the pandemic in Ohio.
- Madison County's level of community transmission is substantial and uncontrolled, requiring significant mitigation strategies for the entire community.⁴
- The winter holidays have the potential to drive exponential growth in cases in Madison County.
- The healthcare and hospital systems that serve Madison County residents are being taxed beyond what has been seen at any time during this pandemic and are currently highly vulnerable to exceeding capacity.



Public Health Advisory

Madison County Sports & Extracurricular Activities

December 2, 2020

Madison County continues to be directly affected by a pandemic from the spread of a contagious, infectious disease, SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19), which endangers the health, safety, and welfare of all residents and poses a significant threat to the healthcare infrastructure in the Central Ohio region. The county as a whole is in a highly vulnerable position as cases are increasing without effective means of control. Madison County Public Health (MCPH) has a responsibility to provide the community with information so that both leaders and residents can make good choices for their health and for the community's health.

The Madison County Board of Health and the Health Commissioner recommend all school sports, club sports, travel sports, league sports, school extracurriculars, and school activities be suspended until at least January 1, 2021 due to the high incidence of COVID-19 throughout the county and the potential for exponential growth in the coming weeks that may fracture the ability of the healthcare system to provide care to not only COVID-19 patients but all those who are in need of care. *Sports and extracurriculars that continue must meet all local and state safety operational guidelines.*

MCPH describes the current context of the pandemic for sports and extracurricular activity decision-making as follows:

- At least 1,730 residents of Madison County have tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus (COVID-19).
- 19 residents of Madison County have died from COVID-19.
- During the prior two weeks, 335 residents of Madison County have been newly diagnosed with COVID-19 at a rate of 748 cases per 100,000 residents, the highest at any time during the pandemic.
- Madison County has been at Level 3 (red) and experiencing high incidence of COVID-19 spread on the Ohio Public Health Advisory System (OPHAS) for two months.
- Madison County is on a path this week to be placed on the watch list, by the Ohio Department of Health, for escalating to Level 4 (purple) indicating severe risk to the health and safety of the county from COVID-19.



- Transmission of COVID-19 in Madison County is very high and there are no indications that the rate of spread will slow without other interventions.
- Sports and extracurricular activities must be reconsidered in the context of local pandemic conditions, especially during times of widespread community transmission, high case incidence, high testing positivity rates, or overburdened case and contact tracing systems.¹
- Indoor winter sports and activities afford very few protective barriers against COVID-19 transmission and are inherently higher risk than outdoor sports.²
- Preserving education is the priority and outbreaks in sports and extracurriculars can threaten education.³
- The healthcare and hospital systems that serve Madison County residents are being taxed beyond what has been seen at any time during this pandemic and are currently highly vulnerable to exceeding capacity.