



This message is from the **Ottawa County Health Department**

The Ottawa County Health Department has been working closely with our school superintendents in regards to schools reopening this fall. As your new health commissioner, I am very pleased to see the thoughts and hard work that our schools have put into their plans to keep students, faculty and staff safe during these unprecedented times. I believe that each school district in Ottawa County is unique and different in many ways but they all have the same desire to help your child to excel in learning in the best and safest way possible.

The health department is here to advise and support each school in their approach to reopening and acknowledges that there is not a “one size fits all” method to reopening. While we have looked closely at each school’s plans to reopen and have advised accordingly, we have also made it very clear that, as this pandemic has proven, the plans for today may not fit tomorrow. This is a very fluid situation and the schools may have to adapt as changes beyond our control are made or if we see an increase in cases within our community. Please be assured that our health department team is monitoring the COVID-19 pandemic very closely both nationally and locally and have established a communication line with each school district to keep them informed as we see new information develop.

Please understand that it is inevitable that we will see new cases of COVID-19 in our community and in the schools in the days to come. It is the health department’s job to monitor all new cases and conduct case investigations to control the spread of the COVID-19 virus much like any other virus or disease. We have advised the superintendents that it is the responsibility of the health department to conduct case investigation and contact tracing for any positive cases within a school. The health department will contact those that are positive or have been potentially exposed. **It will not be the school’s responsibility to notify others when a positive case has been identified within a school.** This is done out of respect for those that have become ill and to be in compliance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

We understand that not every parent, child, or teacher may be comfortable about going back to school in the midst of a pandemic and in all due respect, we understand. It is my understanding that each of the schools have provided an alternative method for those that are not comfortable with in-class learning at this time. It is also important to mention that we can all do our part to stop the spread of the virus by adhering to safe practices such as proper handwashing and staying home if you are sick. It is also important that we follow the state mandated facial covering requirements and maintain a social distance when possible.

To better understand COVID-19 and how it relates to re-opening of your school, we have provided the following information to each of the school districts:

- A COVID-19 FAQ
- Fact sheets on Isolation and Quarantine

As we move forward during this challenging time, I have confidence in each of the Ottawa County Schools will do the best they can in making the right decision to keep everyone safe.

Gerald W. Bingham Jr, MPH, RS  
Ottawa County Health Commissioner

**“Helping the citizens of Ottawa County to live healthier, happier, and longer lives”**

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