



Dear Superintendents and Benton County Public Health Administrators,

On July 14, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released an update to the COVID-19 community levels. Benton county is now categorized to be in high transmission. This signals a need for additional layered prevention strategies to maintain safe, in-person summer programming and keep schools safely open. We ask that school districts and local public health authorities coordinate to determine appropriate layered prevention strategies in schools to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

At minimum, the CDC, Oregon Health Authority (OHA), and the Oregon Department of Education (ODE), *recommend* the following:

- Schools should implement universal indoor masking. All individuals should wear a well-fitting face covering indoors in public, and at school, regardless of vaccination status. Face coverings are effective at preventing the spread of COVID-19 and other respiratory diseases.
- Schools should work with health partners to offer vaccination clinics or otherwise facilitate access to vaccines for students and staff. More information about vaccinations can be found at Get Vaccinated Oregon.
- Schools should consider implementing additional layers of protection such as increased airflow and circulation, implementing free COVID-19 testing programs, retraining staff on all protocols, and educating staff, students, and families about COVID-19 symptoms.
- Schools should monitor unusual absenteeism or illness within a cohort and notify their LPHA about unusual respiratory disease activity if the following thresholds are met.
 1. At the school level: $\geq 30\%$ absenteeism, with at least 10 students/staff absent.
 2. At the cohort level: $\geq 20\%$ absenteeism, with at least 3 students/staff absent.
- Schools should hold events (parent/family conferences, fundraisers, etc.) online, rather than in-person. If events are held in-person, make every effort to hold the events outside, recommend all participants wear masks, and maintain a physical distance.

As a reminder, if students or staff have COVID-like symptoms, schools must exclude the individual per OAR 333-019-0010 (3) & (4). Schools may offer COVID testing to the individual through OHA's Diagnostic Testing Program.

The complete set of CDC recommendations for when a COVID-19 Community Level is high are included in the table below. CDC's COVID-19 Community Levels help communities and individuals make decisions on what COVID-19 prevention strategies to use based on disease transmission rates in the community. These levels factor in a combination of COVID-19 hospitalization rates, healthcare capacity, and COVID-19 cases.

The previous two years have been hard on staff, students, and families. While changes in health and safety measures can add anxiety, they are important for maintaining consistent in-person activities. By attending summer programs, students are better able to engage with their teachers and peers and to access the services and support they need to thrive. Please take action by implementing the recommendations outlined above to preserve in-person instruction for summer programs. Especially during this challenging time, thank you for all you do to make safe, in-person instruction a reality for our students. If you need additional support or have questions, please reach out to ODECOVID19@ode.oregon.gov.

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COVID-19 Community Level	Individual and household-level prevention behaviors	Community-level prevention strategies (as recommended by state or local authorities)
High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wear a well-fitting mask¹ indoors in public, regardless of vaccination status (including in K-12 schools and other indoor community settings) • If you are immunocompromised or high risk for severe disease <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Wear a mask or respirator that provides you with greater protection ◦ Consider avoiding non-essential indoor activities in public where you could be exposed ◦ Talk to your healthcare provider about whether you need to take other precautions (e.g., testing) ◦ Have a plan for rapid testing if needed (e.g., having home tests or access to testing) ◦ Talk to your healthcare provider about whether you are a candidate for treatments like oral antivirals, PrEP, and monoclonal antibodies • If you have household or social contact with someone at high risk for severe disease <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Consider self-testing to detect infection before contact ◦ Consider wearing a mask when indoors with them • Stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccines and boosters • Maintain improved ventilation throughout indoor spaces when possible • Follow CDC recommendations for isolation and quarantine, including getting tested if you are exposed to COVID-19 or have symptoms of COVID-19 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider setting-specific recommendations for prevention strategies based on local factors • Implement healthcare surge support as needed • Protect people at high risk for severe illness or death by ensuring equitable access to vaccination, testing, treatment, support services, and information • Consider implementing screening testing or other testing strategies for people who are exposed to COVID-19 in workplaces, schools, or other community settings as appropriate • Implement enhanced prevention measures in high-risk congregate settings (see guidance for correctional facilities and homeless shelters) • Distribute and administer vaccines to achieve high community vaccination coverage and ensure health equity • Maintain improved ventilation in public indoor spaces • Ensure access to testing, including through point-of-care and at-home tests for all people <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Communicate with organizations and places that serve people who are immunocompromised or at high risk for severe disease to ensure they know how to get rapid testing • Ensure access and equity in vaccination, testing, treatment, community outreach, support services for disproportionately affected populations