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## **BENZIE-LEELANAU DISTRICT HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

Friday, August 27, 2021

### Order Regarding Prevention of COVID-19 Transmission in Educational Settings within Benzie County and Leelanau County, State of Michigan:

The Health Officer of Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department (BLDHD) makes the following factual determinations and issues this Order pursuant to the Michigan Public Health Code, MCL 333.2451 and 333.2453, as well as R. 325.175(4), which is an administrative rule promulgated by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services pursuant to MCL 333.2226(d).

Significant and relevant factual findings include, but are not limited to, the following:

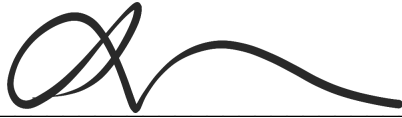
1. In correspondence dated August 3, 2021, the BLDHD notified local School Leaders regarding updated CDC guidelines and the importance of universal masking for all students in K-12 indoor classrooms and specifically mentioned that the BLDHD, by and through the Health Officer and Medical Director, would "...monitor levels of community transmission..." and that preventive measures may need to be "dialed up" based upon pandemic risk factors which include the number of reported cases. Between August 3-27, the Benzie Leelanau District Health Department reported 131 total cases of COVID-19 and 2 deaths – an increase of 274% compared to 35 cases in July. In addition, local hospital authorities have reported a dangerous strain on capacity including limited ICU beds, extremely long wait times in Emergency Departments, resulting in the need to intermittently divert patients to hospitals out of the area which also puts strain on local EMS capacity. Based upon recent trends and heightened risk factors, it is clear within a reasonable degree of medical certainty that absent the implementation of proven preventive measures, increased incidents of school-based transmission are inevitable. This increases the likelihood that (1) students will be infected with the SARS-CoV2 virus which causes COVID-19; (2) students will unknowingly transmit the virus to other students as well as household and community members, further increasing community transmission; and (3) vulnerable students and staff, for example those with pre-existing conditions such as asthma, diabetes, and obesity, will have an increased risk of long-term adverse health impacts, including death. Protection of our younger population and school staff should not be delayed.
2. Without strict implementation of recommended mitigation measures such as masking, it is likely that school related cases will increase sharply. Data from school related cases from the 2020-2021 school year demonstrates that necessary public health measures such as case investigation and contact tracing are time and resource intensive which puts a dangerous strain on the public health system likely resulting in decreased capacity to contain community transmission.







**THIS ORDER** is effective immediately and remains in effect until it has been determined by the Health Department that the risk trends have consistently improved utilizing such indicators as transmission levels, vaccination coverage, hospital capacity and public health capacity AND/OR until further notice from the Health Officer.



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Lisa Peacock, MSN, MPH, RN, WHNP-BC  
Health Officer  
Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department



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Dr. Joshua Meyerson, MD, MPH, FAAP  
Board Certified in Pediatrics  
Medical Director  
Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department

Effective date: August 27, 2021