ORDER OF THE HEALTH OFFICER OF THE COUNTY OF MENDOCINO REGARDING COVID-19 PROTOCOL FOR SCHOOLS

DATE OF ORDER: NOVEMBER 12, 2020
EFFECTIVE UNTIL RESCINDED

Please read this Order carefully. Violation or failure to comply with this Order is a misdemeanor punishable by fine, imprisonment, or both (Cal. Health & Safety § 120295, et seq.; Mendocino County Ordinance No. 4464; Cal. Penal Code § 19)

UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF THE CALIFORNIA HEALTH AND SAFETY CODE SECTIONS 10140, 101085, 120175, THE COUNTY OF MENDOCINO HEALTH OFFICER ORDERS:

1. The Mendocino County Health Officer issues this Order to provide a protocol to support all Mendocino County schools and school-based programs, which have adopted in-person instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic, in accordance with State of California Department of Public Health (CDPH) Guidances: Schools and School-based Programs (https://files.covid19.ca.gov/pdf/guidance-schools--en.pdf); and COVID-19 and Reopening In-Person Learning Framework for K-12 Schools in California, 2020-2021 School Year (hereinafter “CDPH Re-Opening Framework”): (https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/CDPH%20Document%20Library/COVID-19/Schools%20Reopening%20Recommendations.pdf). These guidances and this Order apply to all public schools (traditional and charter) and private schools (including nonpublic nonsectarian schools), and school districts operating in Mendocino County, but not to childcare programs or preschools, which should follow separate statewide childcare guidance and provisions of the local shelter-in-place specific to childcare.

2. COVID-19 Liaison. Prior to re-opening for in-person instruction, each school site in Mendocino County must designate an onsite COVID-19 liaison(s) to be responsible for maintaining regular communication with County Public Health in the event of any exposure at the school involving a COVID-19 positive individual, and responding to COVID-19 issues and concerns of students, parents, teachers, and staff. The COVID-19 Liaison is not required to be a licensed medical professional. The school must email the name and contact information (including phone, fax, and email) for the COVID-19 Liaison to County Public Health by email to DOC-Schools@mendocinocounty.org.

3. School-Based Surveillance Testing Plan. Each school offering in-person instruction must establish a routine for surveillance testing for COVID-19 for all school staff and teachers who have frequent interactions with students or the public. Given constrained public resources, a school’s plan for surveillance testing, may require schools and school districts to establish commercial
surveillance testing. As of issuance of this order, free surveillance testing obtained by County Public Health is accessible through OptumServe (see https://www.mendocinocounty.org/community/novel-coronavirus/covid-19-testing). Free public health testing is available (as lab capacity allows) and based on the priorities outlined by CDPH Guidance for critical infrastructure workers. According to the State, individuals who work in the education sector who have frequent interactions with students or the public qualify for Tier Three Priority surveillance testing. Commercial testing opportunities can be found at: https://testing.covid19.ca.gov/covid-19-testing-task-force-laboratory-list/ and https://covid19.ca.gov/get-tested/. Please note, all surveillance testing should be limited to staff and teachers who are not symptomatic and are not known close contacts of a case of COVID-19. As identified in the CDPH Re-Opening Framework, examples of recommended frequency include testing all staff over 2 months, where 25% of staff are tested every 2 weeks, or 50% every month to rotate testing of all staff over time. Documentation of compliance with a school's surveillance testing plan should be made available upon request by County Public Health through the COVID-19 liaison.

4. **School-Based COVID-19 Exposure Plan.** Prior to re-opening for in-person instruction, each school in Mendocino County must create a plan for when a staff member, child or visitor becomes sick with symptoms associated with COVID-19, is diagnosed with COVID-19, or is a close contact of someone infected with COVID-19. This plan must track the measures required by CDPH Re-Opening Framework, and must include the following:

   a. **Isolation Room and Safe Transportation:** Schools must identify an isolation room or area to separate anyone who exhibits symptoms of COVID-19 and establish procedures for arranging safe transport home or to a healthcare facility as appropriate, when an individual is exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19.

   b. **Procedure for School-Based Response to Student(s)/Teacher(s)/ Staff/ Volunteer(s) with COVID-19 symptoms Who Are Not Confirmed COVID-19 Cases:** These individual(s) should be immediately sent home with instruction to contact their primary care provider as soon as possible for evaluation and testing, or to a healthcare facility (as appropriate). For students with symptoms, staff should immediately communicate with the parent/caregiver and provide space in the designated isolation room until the student can be safely transported home or to a healthcare facility. The school and classroom may remain open. If a person tests negative after symptoms, they may return to school after 24 hours without fever and without the use of fever reducing medications, if other symptoms are resolving, and with a provider’s note or negative test result.

c. **Procedure for School-Based Response to a Confirmed COVID-19 Case Infection At School:**
i. The COVID-19 liaison for the school must confer verbally with County Public Health immediately (on the day it learns of a confirmed COVID-19 case), by contacting (707) 272-8035 and DOC-Schools@mendocinocounty.org for direction; from County Public Health Officials on proper cleaning of the school, isolation of COVID-19 positive individuals and quarantine of all exposed persons at the school.

ii. The school must close off the classroom or office where the COVID-19 positive individual was based and wait at least 24 hours before cleaning and disinfecting. The Health Officer recommends the classroom or office remain closed for 72 hours (including the 24 hour waiting period). The school may remain open unless otherwise directed to close by County or State Health Officer.

iii. The school must work with County Public Health to isolate the COVID-19 positive individual and exclude from school for the isolation period, (10 days from COVID-19 test sample collection and 72 hours after resolution of fever without the use of fever reducing medication and with improvement of symptoms). The school must advise sick staff members and students not to return until they have been released from home isolation pursuant to health officer blanket isolation orders. The school must also document serving the blanket isolation order on the COVID-19 positive individual, (if orders have not already been delivered by County Public Health). Blanket Isolation Orders in English and Spanish (with instructions) are found here: https://www.mendocinocounty.org/community/novel-coronavirus/health-order

iv. The school must work with County Public Health to identify close contacts at the school (i.e., all persons within less than 6 feet of the COVID-19 positive individual for 15 minutes or more cumulatively over a 24 hour period), and exclude close contacts from school (which likely includes the entire cohort/classroom) for 14 days from last date of close contact while infectious (i.e., the 48 hours before symptoms began or within 48 hours before the COVID-19 positive test sample was collected). The school must advise school-based close contacts not to return until they have been released from home quarantine pursuant to health officer blanket quarantine orders. The school must also document serving the blanket quarantine orders on all school-based close contacts (if orders have not already been delivered by County Public Health). The quarantine period is 14 days from last known contact with the case. Blanket Quarantine Orders in English and Spanish (with
instructions) are found here: https://www.mendocinocounty.org/community/novel-coronavirus/health-order

v. The school must implement communication plans for exposure at school and potential school closures, including outreach to students, parents, teachers, staff, labor, and the community.

vi. The school must investigate if any work-related factors contributed to the risk of infection and update protocols as needed to prevent further cases. (See CDPH Guidelines, Responding to COVID-19 in the Workplace: https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/Workplace-Outbreak-Employer-Guidance.aspx)

d. Procedure for School-Based Response to a Student/Staff Member/Volunteer or Teacher’s Exposure to COVID-19 from outside the school whereby the COVID-19 case infection is not a student, staff member, teacher, or volunteer: The school liaison should contact County Public Health immediately by phone to (707) 272-8035, on the day it learns of this potential exposure so that County Public Health can investigate and give guidance. When the exposure is confirmed, the school should send the close contact home and document serving the blanket quarantine orders if they have not already been delivered. The quarantine period is 14 days from last known contact with the case. Blanket Quarantine Orders in English and Spanish (with instructions) are found here: https://www.mendocinocounty.org/community/novel-coronavirus/health-order. The school and classroom may remain open. The school should consider notification and outreach to the school community of a known close contact.

5. School or District Closures. School-wide closure is recommended (and may be required by the Health Officer) in event a school has multiple COVID-19 cases in multiple cohorts or classrooms, or when 5 percent or more of the total number of teachers/students/staff test positive for COVID-19 within a 14 day period. District-wide closure is recommended (and may be required by the Health Officer) if 25% or more of schools within a district have closed due to COVID-19 within 14 days. Nothing in the State Guidelines or this Order prohibits individual schools or school districts (in accordance with their governing bodies) from closing prior to reaching these stated threshold percentages.

6. Facial Coverings. CDPH Guidance requires adults and all children in 3rd grade or above to wear facial coverings. People are exempted from facial covering requirements, if they are under age 2, have a medical or mental health condition or disability confirmed by their primary care provider that would impede them from properly wearing or handling a mask, or when it would inhibit
communication with a person who is hearing impaired. Schools must exclude students third grade and above from on-campus instruction who arrive at school without a facial covering if they are not exempt and refuse to wear one provided by the school.¹ Facial coverings are also required on all school buses.

a. Face Shields. Pursuant to CDPH Guidance and the Health Officer’s facial covering order (https://www.mendocinocounty.org/home/showdocument?id=36531), a face shield (i.e., a piece of rigid, clear plastic attached to a headband which covers the entire face extending from forehead to below the chin) is an acceptable alternative to a cloth facial covering (preferably with a cloth extension stretching from shield to shirt, and tucked in), especially where a facial covering cannot be used for pedagogical or developmental reasons, (i.e., communicating or assisting young children or those with special needs). The Health Officer recommends that a face shield with a mask protects the user, more than the mask alone, and would be an added protection for people who cannot maintain 6 foot distance. The Health Officer notes that when a face shield is used without a mask, a face shield is not as protective to others as the mask.

7. This Order shall become effective upon release, and will continue to be in effect until it is rescinded, superseded, or amended in writing by the Health Officer.

8. Copies of this Order shall promptly be: (1) made available at County of Mendocino Executive Office, County Administration Building, 501 Low Gap Road, Ukiah, California 95482 (2) posted on the County website www.mendocinocounty.org and (3) provided to any member of the public requesting a copy of this Order.

9. If any provision of this Order to the application thereof to any person or circumstance is held to be invalid, the remainder of the Order, including the application of such part or provision to other persons or circumstances, shall not be affected and shall continue in full force and effect. To this end, the provisions of this Order are severable.

IT IS SO ORDERED

Date: 11/12/2020 Issued by: ____________________________

Howard A. Coren M.D.
Health Officer, County of Mendocino

¹ Cal OES has distributed appropriate facial coverings for each school throughout the state to local County offices of education.