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Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

MEMORANDUM

To: All School Officials (Public and Private)

From: Bruce W. Randolph, MD, MPH
Health Officer
Shelby County Health Department

Date: November 15, 2021

RE: Health Order No. 27

The purpose of this Memorandum is to inform schools that the current Health Order No. 27 is still in effect due to the recent orders of US District Court Judge Waverly Crenshaw and US District Court Judge Sheryl Lipman. Please be advised any instance of students, teachers, staff, or visitors not wearing masks while indoors at school, is a violation of the Health Order No. 27, and consequently, the court orders as well. Therefore, please continue to wear masks as required.

Schools have enjoyed a moderately low level of infection due to required masking. The risk of contracting COVID-19 increases when people are in an indoor environment among others who are unvaccinated. The Department strongly encourages everyone who can get vaccinated to do so.

Persons who are considered a “close contact” to someone who is infected with COVID 19 should quarantine if they are not fully vaccinated. In accordance with CDC Guidance, the definition of “close contact” is the following:

“Someone who was less than 6 feet away from infected person (laboratory-confirmed or a clinical diagnosis) for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period (for example, three individual 5-minute exposures for a total of 15 minutes). An infected person can spread SARS-CoV-2 starting from 2 days before they have any symptoms (or, for asymptomatic people, 2 days before the positive specimen collection date), until they meet the criteria for ending isolation.

Exception: In the K–12 indoor classroom setting or a structured outdoor setting where mask use can be observed (i.e., holding class outdoors with educator supervision), the close contact definition excludes students who were between 3 to 6 feet of an infected student (laboratory-confirmed or a clinical diagnosis) if both the infected student and the exposed student(s) correctly and consistently wore well-fitting masks the entire time.

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This exception does not apply to teachers, staff, or other adults in the indoor classroom setting.

Please note the “exception clause” does not apply to students who are not wearing masks. Therefore, unvaccinated students who are exposed (within 6 feet for total of 15 minutes) must quarantine.

If any of the court orders change, the Department will notify you as soon as possible and provide additional guidance.

The best and safest course for our children in schools is for the children to get vaccinated (if they are eligible) and for everyone to continue wearing masks in indoor settings. We appreciate your partnership in protecting our children, and we hope masking until the winter break will avoid any outbreaks prior to schools closing over the holidays.

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