

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Marion County Public Health Department releases initial guidance  
for 2021-2022 school year**

**INDIANAPOLIS** – Today, the Marion County Public Health Department released initial guidance to help schools in Marion County operate safely during the 2021-2022 school year. The recommendations include cohorting of students, maintaining social distancing of three feet, and mask use for students, teachers, and staff who are unvaccinated. The guidance also lays out a recommended quarantine of at least 10 days for staff and students who come in contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case. The recommended guidance issued today was developed in partnership with the U.S. Centers for Disease and Control and Prevention (CDC), the Indiana State Department of Health, and public and private school leadership in Marion County.

“To keep Marion County moving in a positive direction as the contagious Delta variant continues to take hold in Indiana, it is more important than ever that we take precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and provide access to the COVID-19 vaccines,” said Dr. Virginia Caine, Director and Chief Medical Officer of the Health Department. “We will continue to monitor the prevalence and impact of Delta and other new variants while educating residents on the benefits of the COVID-19 vaccines. The Health Department encourages school administrators and staff to keep in mind this guidance for Marion County schools as they begin the 2021-2022 school year in person.”

The following is included in the initial guidance for the 2021-2022 school year:

- Social distancing: recommend cohorting of all students and social distancing of at least three feet.
- Masks/face coverings: masks are recommended indoors for all unvaccinated students, teachers, and staff, as well as any individual with an underlying condition regardless of vaccination status. Masks are also recommended for unvaccinated individuals and those with underlying health conditions in outdoor crowded settings.
- Visitors: masks and social distancing of six feet are recommended for all visitors indoors – parents/guardians, community partners, volunteers – regardless of vaccination status.
- Athletics/extracurricular activities: student athletes are not required to wear masks during practice or games. It is recommended that band, orchestra, and choir groups limit indoor practices and performances to 90 minutes. Additional recommendations for extracurricular activities can be found in the attached guidance document.
- Transportation: masks are required for students, bus drivers, and staff on any school-sponsored transportation by federal government mandate.
- Sanitizing: all high touch surfaces should be sanitized frequently. Hand sanitizer should continue to be available for students and staff.

- Isolation: individuals who test positive for COVID-19 should isolate for a minimum of 10 days following the onset of symptoms, or from the test collection date, if asymptomatic.
- Quarantine: individuals identified as a close contact of a confirmed COVID-19 case should quarantine for a minimum of 10 days after the most recent exposure. A 14-day quarantine is the most protective option. Individuals who can provide documentation that they are fully vaccinated do not need to quarantine unless symptoms develop.

The full guidelines released today for Marion County schools can be found attached.

All eligible Marion County residents are still encouraged to visit [ourshot.in.gov](https://ourshot.in.gov) and find a nearby COVID-19 vaccine clinic. The COVID-19 vaccines save the body from the risk of fighting COVID unprepared by giving the immune system instructions to recognize and kill the virus if exposed, greatly reducing the risk of serious illness due to the virus. The FDA approved these vaccines through an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) process that requires clinical trials involving tens of thousands of people, rigorous evaluation of these trials, and [resulting evidence that the vaccine is safe and effective](#). The COVID-19 vaccine is the most strictly safety-monitored vaccine process in United States history. Serious long-term health problems or fertility issues have not been linked to the COVID-19 vaccine. Those with unanswered questions or concerns about the vaccine can call the Health Department at 317-221-2000 or visit [cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://cdc.gov/coronavirus) or [ourshot.in.gov](https://ourshot.in.gov).

The COVID-19 vaccine is free to everyone, and no social security number is required to receive a vaccine. Free transportation to a vaccine appointment is available [through IU Health](#) by calling 1.888.IUHEALTH and choosing option 9. Free childcare is also available to help parents and caregivers get vaccinated and recuperate from any short-term side effects. More information can be found at [vaccines.gov/incentives.html](https://vaccines.gov/incentives.html).

It is important to not skip the second dose if receiving the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines – vaccine-induced protection is much stronger and longer-lasting after the second dose. Those who previously tested positive for COVID-19 are still encouraged by medical professionals to receive the vaccine, as contracting the virus may only provide limited protection. It is normal to feel some side effects after receiving the vaccine, which can include a fever, chills, tiredness, headache, or aching at the injection site. These side effects are signs that your body is building protection and typically go away in 24-48 hours.

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**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

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