



News Release

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For Immediate Release

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Health Department Responds to State-Wide K-12 School Closure due to COVID-19

Preschools, daycares, and Head Start programs not impacted by mandated closure

(Berrien County, Michigan) – The Berrien County Health Department is responding to the announcement made late on March 12th by Governor Whitmer that effectively closed all K-12 schools starting March 16th through April 5th. This state-wide closure does not impact pre-schools, daycares, or Head Start programs at this time, however, these organizations and programs are able to make individualized closure decisions as needed.

“We understand that this state-wide K-12 school closure decision raises a lot of questions for families in our community,” says Nicki Britten, Health Officer for the Berrien County. “This social distancing measure may seem extreme, particularly before the virus is spreading in Berrien County, but these actions will help mitigate the spread of the virus throughout the state, and result in slowed progression of illness and fewer deaths overall. We all need to do our part to protect the members of our community who are most at risk of serious illness. I urge all residents to continue taking preventive actions to help keep themselves and their families healthy.”

To date, Berrien County has not reported any cases of COVID-19, but with recently increased testing and cases reported in neighboring areas, it is expected that community transmission of the virus will occur.

All Berrien County residents are encouraged to take every day, common sense precautions to avoid getting sick and protect others:

- Implement personal protective measures (stay home when sick, regular handwashing, cover coughs/sneezes, and clean frequently touched surfaces daily).
- Stop hand-shaking – use other noncontact methods for greeting one another (like an elbow bump).
- Create a household plan of action in case of illness in the household or further disruption of daily activities due to COVID-19 in the community.
- Individuals at increased risk of severe illness should consider staying at home and avoiding large gatherings or other situations of potential exposures, including travel.
- Consider canceling non-essential travel as crowded travel settings, like airports, may increase your risk of exposure to COVID-19.

BCHD staff are working day and night to monitor this evolving situation and will continue to provide new information to the community as things change. A hotline has been established to answer questions from the public at **1-800-815-5485** and more information can be found at the Berrien County Health Department website at www.bchdmi.org or by following BCHD on social media.

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