



**BERRIEN COUNTY
HEALTH DEPARTMENT**
better health. stronger communities.

News Release

July 1, 2020

For Immediate Release

Contact: Gillian Conrad

(269) 927-5624

gconrad@bchdmi.org

Berrien County Health Department to Work Collaboratively with Schools to Prepare for Upcoming School Year

(Berrien County, Michigan) - At a press briefing yesterday, Governor Gretchen Whitmer announced the new [MI Safe Schools Return to School Roadmap](#), a comprehensive document to help school districts create local plans for in-person learning in the fall. The Roadmap outlines a number of safety protocols for schools to implement in each phase of the Governor's [MI Safe Start Plan](#) that keeps the health and safety of educators, school staff, and students as a top priority.

One notable element of the Return to School Roadmap is the integration of local health departments into the planning and implementation of the required COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plans that each school must create. The Berrien County Health Department has worked alongside the school community to address the needs of students, staff, and their families and will continue that collaborative relationship as it guides and aids schools through the difficult challenge of bringing students back to the classroom this fall.

Berrien County Health Officer, Nicki Britten, was an integral part of the Return to Schools Advisory Council tasked with informing the creation of the Roadmap and was provided the opportunity to speak on behalf of local public health departments at yesterday's press conference in Lansing. Britten noted, "Many facets of potential mitigation strategies were thought through from all areas of impact including health, financial, developmental, educational quality, feasibility, and community acceptance. While there are no simple solutions to the deeply complex challenges presented by COVID-19, the Roadmap represents the best path forward for schools given the reality we face."

"There is no one size fits all for how to conduct face-to-face education in this pandemic, and local communities will have the opportunity to tailor implementation of the Roadmap to the specific needs of their students," Britten adds. "Local health departments will be working very closely with school leadership to implement the best plans for students, school staff, and broader communities. Health departments and schools already work together to respond to infectious diseases; this year that work will be more important than ever as we all prioritize keeping schools open for face-to-face instruction."

With new COVID-19 cases making a resurgence in some areas of the state, it is important that all residents remain vigilant with the protective measures necessary to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Social distancing, wearing a face covering, and excellent hand hygiene are keys to keeping transmission levels low. Find more information about the latest on COVID-19 in Berrien County including current case counts, testing options, and prevention information at www.bchdmi.org/COVID19.

###