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PRESS RELEASE

The Iroquois County Public Health Department supports back-to-school guidance released by the CDC, IDPH, and ISBE.

Guidance from these sources includes:

- Masks should be worn indoors by all individuals (age 2 and older) who are not fully vaccinated.
- CDC recommends schools maintain at least 3 feet of physical distance between students within classrooms, combined with indoor mask wearing by people who are not fully vaccinated, to reduce transmission risk. When it is not possible to maintain a physical distance of at least 3 feet, such as when schools cannot fully re-open while maintaining these distances, it is especially important to layer multiple other prevention strategies, such as indoor masking.
- Screening testing, ventilation, handwashing, and respiratory etiquette, staying home when sick and getting tested, contact tracing in combination with quarantine and isolation, and cleaning and disinfection are also important layers of prevention to keep schools safe.
- Many schools serve children under the age of 12 who are not eligible for vaccination currently. Therefore, this guidance emphasizes implementing layered prevention strategies (masking, distancing, testing) to protect people who are not fully vaccinated. Source: <http://www.dph.illinois.gov/news/illinois-department-public-health-adopts-cdc-covid-19-prevention-school-guidance>.

In summary, schools should continue COVID-19 mitigation efforts, including masking when indoors. Masking can be optional for those providing proof that they are fully vaccinated. For more information regarding CDC guidance for COVID-19 prevention in K-12 schools please visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html>.

Due to the presence of the COVID-19 Delta variant in Iroquois County and low COVID-19 vaccination rate among Iroquois County residents, ICPHD will continue following a 10-day isolation period for all individuals who test positive for COVID-19 and reverting to a 14-day quarantine for all non-vaccinated individuals identified as a close contact to an individual testing positive for COVID-19. Those fully vaccinated are not required to quarantine if they are exposed to a positive COVID-19 case.

If you can, please get vaccinated. Vaccine is now widely available for ages 12 and older. The Iroquois County Public Health Department (ICPHD) has COVID-19 vaccine available by appointment Monday-Friday; 9 AM- 3:30 PM. To schedule an appointment call 815-432-2483. Please note that individuals under the age of 18 must have a parent or guardian present at the time of vaccination.