



September 3, 2020

Dear Lewis County School Superintendents:

I have been honored to work closely with many of you over the past month as we address the unprecedented challenges facing our public's health, your school districts, and families and children throughout Lewis County. Our discussions have incorporated collaboration, trust, and patience at a time when these qualities are too often in short supply. While the road ahead will continue to challenge us, I am confident in our ability to move forward and navigate whatever comes our way, together.

Here are my updated recommendations for schools in Lewis County.

- School districts should promote behaviors that reduce the spread of the COVID virus, such as:
 - Social distancing at 6 feet, wearing face coverings, washing hands, and sanitizing all surfaces – especially frequently touched surfaces.
 - Screening those children who did not get screened at home.
 - Staggering schedules
 - Grouping children in smaller cohorts
 - Preparing to respond if somebody gets sick, either staff or student, such that a return to distance learning could happen smoothly when either student or staff need to isolate or quarantine.
- Continue distance learning only for the majority of students in Lewis County as described in my August 3, 2020 recommendations.
- Consider restarting in-person Kindergarten no sooner than September 28, 2020.
- Consider allowing middle- and high-school students to attend in-person instruction no sooner than September 28, 2020 in groups no larger than five (5) for laboratory sciences and career and technical education courses requiring on-site attendance to engage in hands-on learning activities that cannot be replicated in a virtual environment.

As children begin returning to classrooms, teachers and school staff will need to monitor the health of students and adults in ways they have never done before. In the coming weeks,

I encourage the Lewis County Schools Workgroup to develop a flow chart that can be posted in every classroom that clearly outlines the process for taking care of suspected and confirmed COVID-19 cases in children and adults.

In addition, here are links to documents that I believe can help support families, teachers, and community members as they work to understand the circumstances and decisions facing everyone in Lewis County:

- CDC Back to School Decision Making Tool
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/community/schools-childcare/back-to-school-decision-checklist.pdf>
- American Academy of Pediatrics Guidance for School Re-entry
<https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/covid-19-planning-considerations-return-to-in-person-education-in-schools/>
- American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry guide to talking to children about COVID-19
https://www.aacap.org/App_Themes/AACAP/Docs/latest_news/2020/Coronavirus_COVID19_Children.pdf
- SAMSHA tips for caregivers, parents, and teachers for talking with children
<https://nwpedcs.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Talking-with-Children.pdf>
- Northwest Pediatric Center information on COVID-19 from pediatric caregivers
<https://nwpedcs.com/covid-19-2019-novel-coronavirus/>

We all know by now that if we want to prioritize children and allow them to safely return to school, our community must remain vigilant in slowing the spread of COVID-19 by maintaining safe practices at work, avoiding social gatherings with those outside your household, and consistently wearing cloth masks in public spaces.

I am encouraged by your efforts on behalf of Lewis County families. Keeping our students and educational and support staff healthy is essential to the health of our county.

Sincerely,

Rachel Wood, M.D., MPH

Lewis County Health Officer

