

COVID-19 response in schools in Wayne County, Michigan

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CATEGORY: Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity (ELC)

The Wayne County Public Health Division (MI) created a uniform COVID-19 case reporting process for all K-12 schools. They also ensured epidemiology staffing to perform COVID-19 surveillance, provide outbreak prevention and mitigation guidance, and monitor COVID-19 vaccine administration in K-12 schools.



The “What”

In the 2020-2021 school year, COVID-19 became, and continues to be a mandatory reportable disease in the state of Michigan. K-12 schools are required to report cases in both students and staff to the local health department within 24-hours of notice. The Wayne County Public Health Division (WCPHD) created a uniform case reporting form for all K-12 schools in Wayne County (excluding the City of Detroit) to utilize, as well as a dedicated, secure email inbox to encourage electronic reporting to increase timeliness of reporting.

With 32 individual local school districts serving well over 210,000 students, WCPHD utilized Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity for the Prevention and Control of Emerging Infectious Diseases (ELC) cooperative agreement funded COVID-19 epidemiologists and case investigation staff to assist with monitoring submitted reports from K-12 schools to identify and investigate potential outbreaks, report weekly surveillance data of school-age cases, provide outbreak prevention and mitigation guidance to K-12 schools, and monitor COVID-19 vaccine administration at WCPHD in-school vaccine clinics throughout the county.



Since the 2020-2021 school year, WCPHD has:

- Identified and investigated **185 school-related COVID-19 outbreaks**, totaling over **1,200 outbreak-associated cases**.
- Held **220 in-school COVID-19 vaccine clinics**, at which **11,681 total doses** have been administered.

The “So What”

Since the 2020-2021 school year, WCPHD has identified and investigated 185 school-related COVID-19 outbreaks totaling over 1,200 outbreak-associated cases. Since May 2021, 220 in-school COVID-19 vaccine clinics have been held by WCPHD at which 11,681 total doses have been administered. Of these in-school clinics, 156 (71%) have been held at schools located in communities with either a ‘high’ or ‘moderate to high’ social vulnerability index ranking, demonstrating the county’s commitment to vaccine equity.

ELC COVID-19 epidemiologists continue weekly surveillance reporting on COVID-19 in Wayne County, including school-age cases. The epidemiologists categorize cases by age group, as well as analyze trends of cases in school aged children and vaccine status by age groups over time. School-related outbreaks, cases related to those outbreaks, and the municipality of the school-related outbreak are all documented and analyzed for trends. This information is provided to WCPHD leadership and has assisted to inform policy decision-making regarding masking and other protective measures, especially during the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 school years.

The “Now What”

WCPHD will continue to monitor COVID-19 in schools as required by disease surveillance and reporting requirements. ELC funding has ensured staffing capacity, expertise and experience. This provides WCPHD the capacity to integrate COVID-19 school surveillance into operations. It also can now better respond and support schools in controlling and mitigating new outbreaks and addressing emerging communicable diseases of concern like mpox and vaccine preventable diseases, which will be critical moving forward based on the impact of COVID-19 on routine childhood vaccinations.

Key contributors to this project include Maysaa Bazzi, Lukas Ayers, Wayne County Public Health Division.