

NEWS

For Immediate Release

October 9, 2020

Central District Health offers additional guidance for Ada County schools with anticipated shift to Category 3 (Red) recommendations next week

Categories to be updated Tuesday, Oct. 13

Ada County, ID — COVID-19 case rates continue to rise in Ada County, which is Central District Health's (CDH) most populous county. With these increases, it's likely that Ada County schools will return to Category 3 guidance, which recommends remote learning over in-person learning.

It is not anticipated that Boise, Elmore, and Valley Counties will move to Category 3 (Red) next week.

Despite the potential for Ada County schools to shift backward, at this time, CDH supports schools maintaining operations with some level of in-person learning even if data place schools in Category 3. "We recognize that many schools and districts have some excellent plans in place that they are consistently following to keep kids in school. While we are seeing cases within our schools and are working closely with those impacted, fortunately, at this time, we are not seeing much school transmission, where people are becoming infected from others in the classroom environment," said Russ Duke, District Director for Central District Health. "We want to be judicious and responsible as to how we guide our schools based on data, as well as what we're seeing in our investigations and contact tracing work," added Duke.

It is important to note that this recommendation may change should increases in case rates continue and increases in the number of people hospitalized as a result of COVID-19.

CDH has issued a position statement for schools which outlines recommendations for Category 3 that give schools more flexibility in maintaining hybrid learning plans. Plans should include all means to reduce risks for students, staff, and teachers, and should include additional restrictions and actions if COVID-19 cases occur.

The following recommendations have been made to schools in the position statement issued by CDH:

- Schools should be working actively to moderate and/or slow reopening plans and adjusting accordingly to reduce risk.
- All programs should be operating with physical distancing measures in place
 - At least 6-feet between individuals or small pods, which are independently spaced groups limited to 3-5 students. These should be in place CONSISTENTLY throughout the

instruction day for in-person operations, including before and after school, classrooms, meal times, and at recess or breaks).

- Schools should evaluate at-home learning or hybrid models if operating in a 5 day-a-week instruction model and physical distancing cannot be maintained.
- All functions of in-person instruction should be evaluated and moved to operations at a reduced capacity if physical distancing (6 ft.) cannot be maintained.
- Programs should work with Central District Health to actively monitor cases and transmission as a result of exposure. Messaging assistance for these occurrences will be provided as requested through CDH.
- If transmission of COVID-19 is occurring in the physical structure or among a specific team or extracurricular event, schools should modify plans and operate under these modified plans for at least 2 weeks from an identified positive case in order to accurately assess if there is additional risk of transmission occurring.
- All cases and any exposed contacts must follow quarantine guidelines outlined by Central District Health in conjunction with the current guidelines provided by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
 - This includes a **full 14-day quarantine** from the date of last exposure for identified contacts.
- Youth extracurricular activities can be high-risk and are leading to a number of exposures and quarantines. During Category 3, we recommend assessing extracurricular activities based on whether the activity can be done with physical distancing and face coverings. For those activities where these mitigations are either not practical or cannot be enforced, they should be paused until in Category 2 to effectively reduce risk of transmission occurring in any and all parties involved in the operation of these events.
 - Extra precautions should be considered in all activities that utilize bussing and/or carpooling, as both increase exposure risk.

This guidance can be found on the Central District Health website at <https://www.cdh.idaho.gov/dac-coronavirus-schools.php>.

Categories to be updated on Tuesday, Oct. 13

The weekly school categories will next be updated on Tuesday October 13, 2020 due to the Columbus Day holiday on Monday. With the exception of holidays, weekly reports are posted on Mondays by 2 pm at <https://www.cdh.idaho.gov/dac-coronavirus-schools.php>. While CDH offices are closed on Monday for the holiday, the COVID-19 call center will remain open with limited hours from 8:30 am to 12:00 pm at 208-321-2222.

How school categories are determined

CDH's weekly recommendations for schools are determined using a specific calculation of a two-week average case rate. Categories are not arbitrarily assigned and are given to schools as recommendations. Ultimately, individual school leaders, school district leaders or school boards make the operational decisions. For more on the calculation that CDH staff use to determine weekly school categories, visit <https://www.cdh.idaho.gov/dac-coronavirus-schools.php>.

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