

COUNTY - PORTER



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The Porter County Health Department recognizes the challenges faced by communities during a global pandemic to prevent death and strain on healthcare resources and yet facilitate emotional health and liberty. As the wave of the covid Delta variant is loosening its grip on our area, parents and schools are hoping to relax mask requirements in school buildings. To this end, the health department has some points to take into consideration when adjusting policy and return to learn plans.

The Indiana Department of Health (IDOH) posts a color coded advisory level map, updated weekly on Wednesdays, at [coronavirus.in.gov](https://www.coronavirus.in.gov). Levels of community transmission are assigned a color code, from Blue, with lowest community transmission, through Yellow, Orange, and Red, which represents the highest community transmission. Porter County has remained in the Yellow advisory category for all but two Orange weeks of the current wave. This moderate level of community transmission is in great part due to the efforts made by the almost 60% of adults in Porter County who have been vaccinated, and is to be commended. Approximately a quarter of youth ages 12-17 have been vaccinated and now vaccines are available to those students ages 5-11 starting this week.

We are hopeful for slow, continued improvement in the transmission of covid, however holiday gatherings and travel has historically been a time of increased cases.

It could be reasonable for schools to loosen mask requirements if the following criteria are met:

1. Porter County is in a Blue advisory status reflecting lower levels of community transmission.
2. Students have had the opportunity to be fully vaccinated, specifically 2 weeks after the second vaccine dose.
3. There is no evidence of ongoing outbreak or transmission within the school.

As always, covid mitigation requires a multifaceted approach, with vaccination and ventilation being most effective in preventing the spread of covid, followed by distancing, face coverings, frequent hand washing or sanitizing, and cleaning of touched surfaces.

Of importance, students who are not fully vaccinated for covid and in a classroom where masks are not uniformly worn, are subject to full quarantine (7, 10 or 14 day quarantine depending on covid testing, as per IDOH guidance) if exposed to a positive covid student or staff, with exposure meaning within 6 feet for 15 or more cumulative minutes per 24 hours. Additionally, school transportation falls under federal regulation and face coverings continue to be required until at least January 8, 2022.