

PERRY COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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Re: Health Department Responsibilities with Schools and Other Entities Regarding Infectious Disease

To Whom It May Concern:

Questions have been raised in regards to the Health Department's roles and responsibilities in the school setting when it comes to infectious disease. This statement is to serve as an overall clarification and not as a comprehensive document.

The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) receives infectious disease guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). From there, the state issues local authority for the control of infectious disease to local health departments. This delegation of authority can be found in 19 CSR 20-20 of the Missouri Statute. Local health departments have a contractual obligation to follow standards set forth by DHSS for individuals who are considered a risk for spreading communicable disease. This applies to both positive or close contacts. See also Sec. 192.300 RSMo effective 06.15.21 and Sec. 67.265 RSMo setting limitations on ordinances and regulations of county health departments.

The COVID-19 pandemic is not the first instance the Health Department has worked with schools, or other entities, regarding the reduction of potential spread of an infectious disease. This collaboration has been a part of regular functions of our agency for other mandated reportable diseases, such as chicken pox, meningitis, etc. In this situation, much like COVID-19, the school works with the Health Department to identify those who may have been exposed. The Health Department then provides guidelines set forth by the DHSS for quarantine, and assists with additional mitigation measures as well as outreach and education for all involved.

Schools within the public-school system are regulated by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). DESE has collaborated with DHSS to create joint documents on the control of COVID-19 within the school setting. Their most recent document is very helpful in explaining some of the processes and the roles of each agency. This document can be found at <https://dese.mo.gov/media/pdf/covid-mo-k-12-school-guidance>.

Outside of any state or local ordinances issued, any policy or procedure within the school to help control spread is decided by the school's governing body. The one exception is post exposure quarantine practices. When asked, the Health Department will work with the school in any way possible to discuss ideas, shared best practices, etc.

The Perry County Health Department will work with the school to keep students, staff and visitors safe. Our efforts will focus on balancing safety with allowing students to get back to regular activities within the confines set forth by our regulatory agencies. We appreciate everyone's understanding in this matter.