



State of Wisconsin
Department of Health Services

Tony Evers, Governor
Karen E. Timberlake, Secretary

April 29, 2021

Dear Wisconsin School Administrators,

Due to increased COVID-19 case activity in surrounding states, including Michigan and Minnesota, we wanted to provide schools with a situation update on COVID-19 to help ensure the health and safety of Wisconsin students:

COVID-19 disease activity

Surrounding states, including Minnesota, Illinois, and Michigan are experiencing a [high level of community transmission](#). Currently, [COVID-19 disease activity level in Wisconsin is 'High.'](#) COVID-19 variants are likely contributing to an increase in COVID-19 cases. Wisconsin has all 4 identified [variants of concern](#) circulating throughout the state. COVID-19 variants can spread more rapidly and easily than the original strain of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.

COVID-19 transmissibility among children and youth

Compared to other age groups, [people under age 18](#) make up the majority of new COVID-19 cases in Wisconsin. As of April 29, the [14-17 year old age group](#) account for the most cases of COVID-19 among children younger than age 18, followed by the 9-13 year old age group. Because most children are not yet able to get vaccinated, they are a population at risk of catching and spreading COVID-19, including variants of the virus that causes COVID-19.

COVID-19 vaccination efforts

Wisconsin continues to be a national leader in vaccine administration. As of April 29, 42.8% of the state's population has received at least one dose of vaccine, and 33% are fully vaccinated. **Although vaccination efforts continue to ramp up, most children are not yet eligible to get the COVID-19 vaccine.** Pfizer is the only vaccine authorized for individuals 16 years and older. As of April 29, [24.7% of people age 16-17](#) have received at least one dose of vaccine in Wisconsin.

Help stop the spread of COVID-19

Because case activity is still high throughout our state, it is essential to continue COVID-19 mitigation strategies in schools and child care settings. A critical mitigation strategy continues to be wearing masks. The science is clear – masks work. According to a study published by CDC, [COVID-19 incidence among students and staff members was lower](#) than the county overall in 17 rural Wisconsin schools, where mask-wearing was common. That is why DHS is urging schools to continue mask wearing to slow the spread of COVID-19. In addition to masks, [CDC's new guidance on schools](#) offers important up-to-date guidance on additional measures schools can take to prevent infection.

DHS has also received federal funding to develop a program to [support school based COVID-19 testing](#) for teachers, staff, and students. Through this program, schools are immediately able to access Point-of-Care Antigen tests. DHS is developing more robust testing support for the 2021-2022 school year. Additional PCR testing supplies may be available for Spring and Summer 2021. More information will be shared as it is available. Participation in the program is voluntary and free of cost. If you have questions about the program, email DHSK12CovidTesting@dhs.wisconsin.gov.

For the latest COVID-19 information and resources for schools, please visit [DHS' website](#). Thank you for your continued leadership and dedication to keeping Wisconsin students, teachers, and staff safe during this unprecedented time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Julie Willems Van Dijk". The signature is written in black ink on a light-colored background.

Julie Willems Van Dijk
Deputy Secretary