

September 30, 2020

Dear Maquoketa Valley parents, staff, and students,

The Iowa Department of Public Health has issued new guidance on quarantine recommendations. We will continue to follow all of the safety protocols that have been in place at Maquoketa Valley. These have proven to be effective and provide the best protection for everyone in our school community. We will continue working with Delaware County Health and follow their guidance on who must be quarantined. See the new information below from the Iowa Department of Health.

IDPH Adjusts Quarantine Recommendations

The Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) is making a change on quarantine recommendations for people that have been exposed to a positive case of COVID-19. This applies in non-healthcare, non-residential settings only. This includes businesses, education and child care settings.

- Close contacts of COVID-positive cases will no longer need to quarantine for 14 days if a face covering was worn consistently and correctly by the positive case and close contacts. The positive case must isolate. The close contacts should self-monitor.
 - Self-monitoring entails close monitoring for COVID-19 symptoms over the subsequent 14 days, staying home if any symptoms develop, and speaking with a healthcare provider about COVID-19 testing in the case of any illness.
 - If people who are self-monitoring become ill but do not get tested, they should remain home until 10 days after symptom onset.
- People currently in quarantine may be released from quarantine if a face covering was worn consistently and correctly by the positive case and close contacts during exposure.
- If the positive case wore a face covering, but close contacts did not, those close contacts must be quarantined.
- If the positive case did not wear a face covering, close contacts must quarantine whether or not they wore a face covering.
- Quarantine of close contacts will still be necessary in residential and healthcare settings.

Please find an infographic depicting the new IDPH recommendations at <https://idph.iowa.gov/Portals/1/userfiles/61/covid19/resources/WhenToQuarantine.pdf>

Masks are proven to be effective in preventing the spread of COVID-19. Increased mask use will reduce the number of individuals that need to quarantine. Along with wearing a face mask, we ask that everyone continue all recommended public health strategies:

- Stay home when sick.
- Maintain social distancing of at least 6 feet whenever possible.
- Wash hands frequently.

This approach is based on data and focused feedback from community and school leaders over the past month indicating that transmission is not frequently occurring when both parties are wearing face masks consistently and correctly. Additionally, we are aware of other jurisdictions, including Nebraska and Wyoming, that have made similar changes based on experiences in their states. We will continue to make recommendations based on best available information and adjust when needed.

New Guidance on Gaiters as Protective Masks:

There is new guidance on the use of gaiters as protective masks as you can see on this link: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/about-face-coverings.html> This guidance, which is adopted by Delaware County Health, indicates if a person comes in contact with a COVID positive person, they will not have to quarantine if both had appropriate masks but they both would have to quarantine if one or both was wearing a gaiter. The evaluation of gaiters is on-going but the effectiveness is unknown at this time. As a result, we will require all students and staff at school to wear a mask and not a gaiter. This will provide us the greatest opportunity of keeping everyone healthy and not have to quarantine.

Thank you for your continued support and patience as we work through this pandemic.

Dave Hoeger