



Elkhart County Health Department

Lydia Mertz, MD

Health Officer

August 7, 2020

On August 6, 2020, I spoke with the superintendents of the Elkhart County public schools regarding my preliminary concerns associated with beginning in-person education and continuing in-person extracurricular activities. These preliminary concerns arose as a result of a high positivity rate at an Elkhart County testing site in conjunction with our slight upward trend of the Elkhart County 7-day moving average positivity rate. Due to the closeness of the scheduled school openings and my receipt of this information, I needed to begin exchanging information with the superintendents. Following this meeting, rumors spread throughout Elkhart County about the closing of schools. In light of the circumstances, I fully understand why Elkhart County superintendents responded and provided information to their students, parents, and staff. I understand that it is important for everyone to receive as much advance notice as possible before an action is taken impacting our schools.

After my discussions with the public school superintendents, I was able to obtain additional information from the Indiana State Department of Health regarding the positivity rate and testing site. I have learned that the positivity rate at the testing site was impacted by positive cases from residents outside of Elkhart County, which will not impact Elkhart County's 7-day moving average positivity rate. I was also able to communicate directly with Dr. Kris Box, Indiana State Health Commissioner, and Dr. Lindsay Weaver, ISDH Chief Medical Officer, regarding the current Elkhart County circumstances and compare the same to other counties that have successfully started in-person education. The Indiana State Department of Health confirmed that counties experiencing a higher positivity rate than Elkhart County have successfully reopened schools to in-person education. I also discussed the existing COVID-19 Plans to Reopen in place throughout schools in Elkhart County with Dr. Kris Box. I am pleased to report that Dr. Kris Box agrees that our schools have strong COVID-19 Plans to Reopen. After a thorough review of all relevant data and information, I have issued Public Health Order No. 04-2020 related to in-person education and extracurricular activities. I will continue to work with the Indiana State Department of Health as we address the needs of our community.

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