

SCHOOL DISTRICT OF OKALOOSA COUNTY

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MEDIA RELEASE
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FOR RELEASE

STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH ISSUES EMERGENCY RULE 64DER 21-15 Protocols for Controlling COVID-19 in School Settings

On Wednesday, September 22nd, Florida State Surgeon General Joseph Ladapo issued Emergency Rule 64DER21-15 which modified quarantine requirements for contact-traced students in school districts throughout Florida. The rule now gives parents the ability to keep their unvaccinated child in school if they are known to be close contacts to a positive COVID-19 case **as long as they remain asymptomatic**. Previously, unvaccinated students who were close contacts to a positive COVID-19 case were required by the Department of Health to quarantine for up to seven days regardless of whether or not they had symptoms. (NOTE: Vaccinated students who were identified as close contacts have always been permitted to attend school as long as they had no symptoms.)

Effective immediately, school districts across Florida will be implementing this Emergency Rule. In Okaloosa County, schools are contacting parents to notify them of the option to allow their contact-traced student to attend school as long as they are well. The Emergency Rule requires districts to allow students to attend without restriction or disparate treatment.

Superintendent Marcus Chambers said the District will be keeping all current safety protocols in place during this transition and will evaluate them periodically. "Students will continue to be encouraged to wear masks when social distancing cannot be maintained, and we will follow all of our existing safety protocols. Those haven't changed."

Chambers noted an additional safety measure in response to the Emergency Rule. "We have added a layer of safety to this emergency rule by having schools conduct wellness checks on all close contacts each morning to ensure they continue to be asymptomatic." The District also asks that parents continue to do wellness checks at home and keep their child home if they are not well.

The entire text of this Emergency Rule and information about safety measures in our schools can be found on the district's website along with the COVID-19 Dashboard that tracks positive cases by school.

Parents are encouraged to contact their child's school for additional information.

Note: The protocols for Eglin Elementary School on Eglin Air Force Base will be in accordance with the ICD guidance for the installation. The protocols for Eglin Elementary are not impacted by the Emergency Rule.

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