

## **Hope You are Safe, Masked, Distanced, and Sanitized!!**

**Tom Moscovic – Legislative Committee**

### **CDC Does Not Recommend Schools Test All Students, Staff for Coronavirus**

New **federal coronavirus guidance** does not recommend universal testing of all students and staff in K-12 schools, an idea that has been floated as educators and policymakers seek ways to safely return students to their classrooms after extended building shutdowns.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommendations suggest **testing efforts for K-12 students** should focus on those with symptoms of the virus and those who may have had exposure to infected individuals.

Universal testing may be logistically challenging and disruptive, creating concerns about issues like resources, parental consent, and student privacy, says the guidance, which was released Wednesday evening.

"Universal SARS-CoV-2 testing of all students and staff in school settings has not been systematically studied," the CDC says. "It is not known if testing in school settings provides any additional reduction in person-to-person transmission of the virus beyond what would be expected with implementation of other infection preventive measures (e.g., social distancing, cloth face covering, hand washing, enhanced cleaning and disinfecting). Therefore, CDC does not recommend universal testing of all students and staff."

Federal public health officials have said in congressional hearings that increasing access to testing for the general public will be necessary to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 as the country reopens schools and businesses. Broader testing efforts may help address one concern: Many infected individuals do not initially show symptoms of the virus, and some never will, which means they can unknowingly spread it.

"All roads **back to work and school** lead through testing," Sen. Lamar Alexander, R-Tenn., chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions committee, said at a May meeting. He suggested a college president or a middle school principal may want to test all students and staff to aid reopening. But the CDC recommendations call for a more-targeted approach for most K-12 schools. And they say that school staff should not be expected to directly administer the tests, referring students and staff to outside health providers, or school-based clinics if they have the capability to conduct testing.

"In some circumstances, school-based health-care providers (e.g., school nurses, physicians) may conduct SARS-CoV-2 testing in their capacity as health-care providers, such as in school-based health centers," the CDC says. "Not every school-based health-care provider will have the resources or training to conduct testing, and accordingly, should not feel compelled to do so; these providers can help link students and their families and staff to other opportunities for testing in the community."

Testing plans should be created in consultation with local health officials, the agency says. And they should be part of a "comprehensive strategy" that includes "promoting behaviors that reduce spread, maintaining healthy environments, maintaining healthy operations, and preparing for when someone gets sick."

Many school districts, following guidance from their states, have already said they will regularly screen students for COVID-19 symptoms, even taking their temperature to check for fevers before they enter buses or buildings. That sort of screening is "one of many different tools" schools can use to lower risk, but it won't catch asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic cases, the CDC says.

When students or staff show symptoms, schools should immediately isolate them until they can return home or to a health-care provider, the guidance says. And schools should work with local health officials to trace contacts and determine who should be referred for testing.

## **Ohio drops in national rankings of childhood well-being; ranks in bottom half of state in majority of indicators**

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- Ohio ranked 31st of all states in the country for overall childhood well-being, according an annual report released by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

The Kids Count Report ranking, which uses 2018 data, is a drop in the rankings for the state. Last year, Ohio ranked 27th in overall childhood well-being. The report uses 16 indicators, partially pulled from U.S. Census Data, to determine the rankings. Those indicators are grouped into four areas: economic, education, health and family and community.

Ohio ranked in the bottom half of the country in 10 of the 16 indicators.

The biggest drop in the rankings for an individual area was in education. The state dropped eight spots between 2017 and 2018 data. Indicators in that area include:

- Young children aged three and four not in school: 56%
- Fourth graders not proficient in reading: 64%
- Eighth graders not proficient in math: 62%
- High school students not graduating on time: 18%

The percentages for eighth graders not proficient in math and high school students not graduating on time are both improvements from about 10 years ago, but the percentage for young children not in school is worse. The 64% total for fourth graders not proficient in reading is about the same.

Full ranking comparisons for the four indicator areas are:

### **Economic:**

2017 data: 23rd

2018 data: 27th

### **Education**

2017 data: 16th

2018 data: 28th

### **Health:**

2017 data: 29th

2018: data: 31st

### **Family and community:**

2017 data: 31st

2018 data: 32nd

The Children's Defense Fund issued a release on the report Monday, noting the backslide on many indicators was alarming. Though the data is from before the coronavirus pandemic, Executive Director Tracy Najera said in the release that the indicators can serve as a reminder of what needs to be prioritized moving forward.

"Ohio has an opportunity to protect child well-being as we move into the recovery phase of this pandemic," Najera said. "These measures must stay front and center as we make crucial decisions in response to the health crisis and the resulting budget crisis. We cannot allow our children and families to move backwards."