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For Immediate Release

Health Officials Urge Parents to Keep Sick or Exposed Children Home *Ignoring isolation or quarantine instructions could result in criminal charges*

(SALT LAKE COUNTY)—Salt Lake County Health Department (SLCoHD) announced today that as of September 7—after 10 days of in-person schooling in three of the county’s five school districts (and 15 days of in-person schooling in Murray)—the department has identified 150 COVID cases and 34 outbreaks associated with K–12 schools. In addition, more than 1,700 people have been exposed to COVID in a school setting due to the 150 cases; these 1,700+ people are therefore now quarantined for 14 days following their exposure to watch for symptoms and ensure they don’t further spread the virus. These data are for all five public school districts as well as for private and charter schools in the county.

“Unfortunately, we have had several children with fever, cough, or other COVID symptoms attend school and expose their classmates and school personnel to illness,” said Dr. Dagmar Vitek, SLCoHD medical director. “Anyone with COVID symptoms needs to isolate at home for 10 days from when symptoms began or 24 hours after their fever ends, whichever is longer.”

SLCoHD also reports that numerous children in the county have attended school while they were supposed to be quarantined because they had been exposed to someone with COVID.

“We will not be successful in controlling the spread of COVID if community members do not follow public health’s recommendations,” continued Dr. Vitek. “If we, as a community, want to continue in-person schooling, it is essential that people who are ill or have been exposed stay home until they complete their isolation or quarantine.”

A “school-associated case” is a person with COVID who attended or visited a K–12 school or school-related event during a time in which they could have caught or transmitted COVID to or from another individual. Not all school-associated cases originated in a school setting, but all presented an exposure risk in a school or at a school-related event. Disease prevention precautions like consistently and correctly wearing face coverings significantly decrease the exposure risk.

An outbreak is two or more cases in a single location within 14 days. [Utah’s COVID-19 School Manual](#) recommends that a classroom move to all-virtual instruction if there are three cases in that classroom within 14 days; the manual recommends an entire school move to all-virtual instruction if there are 15 cases (or 10% of the student body—whichever is smaller) within 14 days. The 34 outbreaks in Salt Lake County schools to date have resulted in SLCoHD recommending that one school and one classroom move to all-virtual instruction (additional schools or classrooms may have made the choice to move virtual on their own).

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Beginning today, the SLCoHD COVID data dashboard at SaltLakeHealth.org will include a slide with data on school-associated cases. The school slide will include the data listed below:

- Total number of cases in each district (or private/charter) in the county
- Total number of cases in each type of school (high school, middle school, elementary, combined K-12, or “other” for special education and technical campuses)
- Individual schools with cases and whether the school has met the case threshold of 15 or more that triggers the recommendation to move to all-virtual instruction

People who have been within 6 feet of someone with COVID for 15 minutes or more should quarantine and watch for symptoms for 14 days after their last exposure to the positive person. During quarantine, they should not leave home for ANY reason, except when advised by a health care provider to seek medical care in person. People in quarantine should not go to work or any public place, including stores, malls, theatres, restaurants or any other retail establishment. They should not visit family or friends or have any visitors at their home.

Health officials encourage anyone with any COVID symptom to be tested by finding a test site near them at coronavirus.utah.gov. Testing is widely available and there is **no cost** to the patient being tested.

People waiting for test results who are symptomatic should remain isolated until they receive their result. People waiting for test results who do not have symptoms should remain quarantined for their full 14-day quarantine period in case they were tested before symptoms appeared.

Symptomatic people who choose not to be tested will be treated as positive for isolation-release purposes; they will not be cleared to return to work or school earlier if they do not get tested—there is no benefit for an individual not to be tested.

Failure to follow isolation or quarantine instructions to protect public health may result in an involuntary Order of Restriction and associated legal proceedings. If SLCoHD issues an involuntary Order of Restriction, failing to abide by that Order may result in class A or B misdemeanor criminal charges. In the case of a minor not following an Order, depending on the circumstances, the minor’s legal parent or guardian may be held legally responsible. To date, SLCoHD has not issued any Orders of Restriction related to schools.

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