



August 19, 2020

Montana is a local control state. Local school boards and local health departments have the legal authority to determine how schools will operate in light of the COVID-19 outbreak unless overridden by directives from the Governor. Your [school or district](#) should be your first point of contact regarding services your school or district is offering at this time, or if you have questions or concerns regarding those services.

Q: Who is in charge of school reopening plans?

A: Montana is a local control state with regard to education. Local school boards and local health departments have the legal authority to determine how schools will operate in light of the COVID-19 outbreak unless overridden by directives from the Governor. The OPI has provided [guidance](#) for schools as they consider their local reopening plans.

Q: How do I submit comments regarding the state's response to COVID-19?

A: General comments and questions regarding COVID-19 to the Governor, DPHHS, Disaster and Emergency Services, etc can be emailed to COVID19@mt.gov. Education specific questions and comments can be sent to OPICOVID19@mt.gov.

Q: Where do I find COVID-19 updates?

A: DPHHS displays COVID-19 stats on this [webpage](#) which is updated daily. Montana's main COVID-19 website is COVID19.MT.GOV. For school-specific information and school-specific categories, visit OPI.MT.Gov/Re-opening-Schools

Q: I am a parent and I disagree with my school's reopening plan. Who do I contact?

A: Following the local chain of command, parents should speak with their child's teachers, principal, superintendent, and school board trustees to resolve issues related to their child's education.



Q: I am a teacher and I disagree with my school's reopening plan. Who do I contact?

A: Following the local chain of command, teachers should speak with their principal, superintendent, and school board trustees to resolve issues related to their preferred teaching methods.

If a teacher is unable to resolve their issue through the chain of command, they should reach out to their local union representative to discuss their contract. If their local union representative is not responsive, they should reach out to the [Montana Federation of Public Employees](#) which is the state teacher's union.

Finally, at-risk teachers may be eligible for paid-leave assistance through the federal [Families First Coronavirus Response Act](#).

Q: Does my child have to wear a mask at school?

A: On August 12th, the Governor issued a [directive](#) requiring masks to be worn in schools in counties with four or more active COVID-19 cases.

Q: Are there exceptions to the mask directive?

A: The Governor's [directive](#) includes medical exemptions. If your child/student has an Individual Education Plan or 504 plan, consult with your special education teacher to ensure that federal Americans with Disabilities Act and Individual with Disabilities Education Act provisions are being met and that your child/student is being accommodated.

Q: Does the mask mandate apply to school-related activities? How do I find sports information?

A: The Governor's mask directive applies to indoor and outdoor school-sponsored activities including sporting events, with exceptions. Outside of the Governor's authority, the Montana High School Association (MHSA) governs sports. You can find MHSA guidance and contact information [here](#).



Q: How will COVID-19 outbreaks, data, and information be shared with parents, students, and teachers?

A: This will be handled by county health departments in coordination with school administrators. Health departments are the lead medical experts in communities and they will be the primary entity responsible for public notification in the event of an outbreak. They will work with district administrators to share information with families as quickly as possible. If a parent, student, or staff member is concerned about potential COVID-19 exposure, they should notify their county health department and school administrator.

Q: Who do I contact if I don't believe that my school is following health advisories or directives?

A: Health directives are enforced at the local level by county health departments and county attorneys. You should contact your local county health officer or county attorney to file a complaint.

Q: How do I enroll my student in a different school or district?

A: Montana [law](#) allows districts to choose to have an open enrollment policy to accept out of district students. Currently, a provision requiring the student to attend in-person has been waived. Check with the district office of the school in which you would like to send your child to learn what their enrollment policies are for out of district students.

Q: How do I homeschool my child?

A: Montana parents have the right to homeschool their children by registering with the county superintendent of schools. You can learn about the process [here](#).