

# Center Moriches Union Free School District

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November 13, 2020

Dear Center Moriches Families,

Recently, Suffolk County has seen an increase in the COVID-19 infection rate. After months remaining below one percent, most recently we have now seen rates rise above 3% County-wide. Here in Center Moriches we have not been spared, and recently have witnessed an increase in reported positive cases. A number of these cases have required students or staff in our schools to quarantine. It is our practice to report positive cases that impact our schools. However, in instances where related positive cases arise from close contacts already in quarantine, with no further action necessary, additional notifications may not be necessary. Thankfully, the cases we have witnessed have been on a relatively small scale and we have not seen transmission occur in school. This is a clear indicator that the measures we put in place in our reopening plan are working. The reduced capacity at our secondary campus and our hybrid model has thus far enabled us to avoid large-scale quarantines in the Center Moriches Schools.

Since the start of the pandemic, I have been in regular communication with the Suffolk County Department of Health Services (SCDHS). This has been for advice on cases impacting CM, as well as to establish and refine school-based practices with regard to reporting and handling of positive COVID-19 cases in the County. Since September, SCDHS has been maintaining data on over 900 positive cases, impacting 300 schools and have conducted an analysis of the impacts of quarantines in schools. Based on this analysis, SCDHS has indicated that transmission is not happening within schools. The protocols we have implemented within our schools; universal masking, maintaining six-foot social distance and handwashing are working to limit transmission. The [SCDHS Letter to Superintendents](#) describes the positive impact of precautions that schools have taken and outlines how the role of SCDHS is changing as we move forward.

However, SCDHS has indicated that the community spread is occurring during gatherings outside of school. As a District, we have been witness to this, as gatherings for Halloween have resulted in an increase in positive cases and local quarantines. You may have seen that on Wednesday, November 11, Governor Cuomo issued a new [Executive Order](#) that imposed two key limitations:

- Bars, restaurants and gyms must close by 10 p.m.
- Gatherings in private residences are now limited to 10 people

SCDHS has requested our assistance in encouraging our communities to promote holiday celebrations with household members only. We ask for your continued support and cooperation in reinforcing the measures and practices we know work to minimize transmission outside of school. Avoid large gatherings, maintain social distance, wear a mask and practice hand and respiratory hygiene. In addition, the SCDHS requests that we emphasize that travel during the holiday season is a growing concern, as positive cases are increasing across the nation. Under the current NYS Travel Advisory, if New Yorkers travel to a location on the [NYS Travel Advisory](#) list, a 14-Day quarantine is mandated by law. Recently, the Governor modified this to allow people to release from quarantine earlier if they meet certain testing requirements. If you or your family members have plans to travel this Thanksgiving or during the holiday break in December, please check the list of states on the NYS Travel Advisory List and please complete the [CM Notification of Travel to Restricted Location form](#).

Finally, there have been some unsubstantiated rumors that schools in Suffolk County are planning to close between the holiday breaks. Please know that this is not accurate and there are no plans for any closure of our schools during the upcoming holiday season. We will continue to follow the protocols prescribed by the SCDHS, as providing a safe learning environment remains our highest priority.

Warm Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "R. Masera".

Dr. Ronald M. Masera  
Superintendent of Schools