

375 Michigan children infected with COVID-19 every day

Zac Corrigan, Genevieve Leigh
8 October 2021

On Sunday, October 24, The World Socialist Web Site will host an online event featuring a panel of epidemiologists and other scientists, to explain how COVID-19 can be eradicated and the pandemic finally brought to an end. We urge all those concerned about the situation in Michigan to register today.

A new report from the state of Michigan released Tuesday shows a steady rise in COVID-19 cases among children, with over 375 children under 12 years old becoming infected each day over the previous week. As of Friday, 35 children are now hospitalized with the virus across the state, more than double the number from one month ago.

The report also makes an explicit warning about the dangers of Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C), stating, “Expect cases to rise in future” because “Higher community transmission is followed by higher incidence of MIS-C cases nationally.”

MIS-C is a horrific condition observed in some children infected with COVID-19, in which “multiple organ systems become inflamed or dysfunctional,” as the report explains. At least 169 children and adolescents in Michigan alone have suffered MIS-C so far, the majority of them younger than 12. Over 70 percent of Michigan’s MIS-C patients have been sent to the ICU and five have died.

Contrary to the claims of the Biden administration, children can catch COVID-19, suffer severe symptoms, and even die from the virus. Last week, 22 children died from COVID-19 in the US, bringing the nationwide pediatric death toll to 520. Michigan is one of several states that do not report the total number of child COVID-19 deaths, but among the victims was an 18-year-old student at Decatur High School, near

Kalamazoo. Internationally, COVID-19 is now the leading cause of death among children in Brazil.

Recent studies also indicate that roughly one in seven infected children develops Long COVID, suffering debilitating symptoms months after infection. Another study showed an average loss of two to seven IQ points in those who have recovered from COVID-19. For comparison, lead poisoning can cause a loss of two IQ points.

In-person learning is not only putting children’s lives and health at risk; it is fueling the spread of the pandemic through communities throughout Michigan and nationally. The daily new case rate in Michigan has increased over 75 percent since schools fully reopened across the state one month ago, with the seven-day average going from 2,360 on September 7 to 4,175 on October 7. The new report shows that school-aged children (5-18 years old) saw a rapid rise in infections and hospitalizations over the same time period, larger than any other age group.

With Michigan’s daily new case rate on the rise, K-12 schools are not only the largest source of the recorded COVID-19 outbreaks across the state. For the third week in a row, schools are the source of the *absolute majority* of new outbreaks in Michigan.

The latest weekly data from the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services shows 167 new recorded outbreaks. Ninety-four of them were at K-12 schools. The next most likely place to catch COVID-19 in Michigan last week was at a nursing home, where 26 outbreaks were recorded.

This is in spite of the fact that on September 28, Michigan changed the way it measures outbreaks in schools, now requiring at least three related cases to constitute an outbreak instead of two. Schools were the only type of location which underwent that change, yet

even with this handicap they remain the highest recorded source of transmission.

The 94 new outbreaks are on top of another 270 *ongoing* outbreaks at K-12 schools in Michigan that were initially recorded last month but continue to grow. The state's largest ongoing outbreak is at St. Charles High School in Saginaw County, where 48 students have tested positive so far in a growing outbreak first recorded on September 20. Next is Cedar Springs High School in Kent County, outside of Grand Rapids, with 44 COVID-positive students.

Click here for interactive map of COVID outbreaks in Michigan K-12 schools.

Even these figures underestimate the degree to which schools cause community spread, because only students and teachers are included in the case totals. Family members of children and teachers who become infected in the same chain of transmission are not included in these outbreaks, nor are any other members of their communities who may catch COVID-19 from a child, teacher or school staff member outside of a school. Since the pandemic began, over 140,000 US children have lost a parent or caregiver to COVID-19.

This is not the first time that school reopenings have fueled a surge in cases in Michigan. In March, the reopening of schools while the Alpha variant was spreading produced a massive spike in cases throughout the state.

The Delta variant—which is now responsible for 99 percent of COVID-19 cases in Michigan—is at least twice as contagious as the original “wild type” of COVID-19 and can cause “breakthrough” cases among those who are fully vaccinated.

Science shows that although masks and vaccines reduce the spread of COVID-19, these measures cannot stop the spread of the highly contagious Delta variant. However, school districts across the state are touting these inadequate mitigation measures to pretend schools are safe to open when they are not.

The mask issue is being used to attack public health and public education from two flanks: on one side, the Michigan state legislature recently passed a reactionary budget that takes away funding from local health departments which enforce mask mandates in schools; on the other side, schools that do have mask mandates are using it as an excuse to flout contact tracing and quarantines.

As Evert Public Schools Superintendent Shirley Howard wrote in a letter to parents on September 21, “Wearing a mask prevents your child from having to quarantine if they are identified as a close contact to someone who has tested positive for COVID.” Since then, outbreaks have been recorded at Evert High School (3 cases), Evert Middle School (9 cases) and Evert Elementary School (5 cases).

Masks, vaccines and other mitigation measures are important, but they must be incorporated into a comprehensive program of public health measures aimed at bringing COVID-19 infections down to zero in ever-broader geographic regions and ultimately eradicating the virus worldwide. These necessary measures include the temporary closure of schools and nonessential workplaces, mass testing, contact tracing, the safe isolation of infected patients, travel restrictions, and more. If implemented in a combined manner and coordinated globally, the pandemic could be brought to an end within months.

On Sunday, October 24, the WSWS and the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees are hosting a webinar with scientists and workers to discuss the present state of the pandemic and what must be done to eradicate COVID-19 worldwide. All parents, educators and workers in Michigan and globally should register to attend today and invite your coworkers and build this event as widely as possible.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact