



Bayfield County Health Department

117 East Sixth Street - P.O. Box 403 - Washburn, WI 54891 Phone: 715/373-6109
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*Sara Wartman, BSN, RN, CLS
Health Director/Health Officer*

ORDER OF THE BAYFIELD COUNTY HEALTH OFFICER:

**IMPOSING A COUNTYWIDE RESTRICTION
ON INTERSCHOLASTIC COMPETITIONS
AND SPECTATOR EVENTS
TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF COVID-19**

DATE OF ORDER: Monday, September 28, 2020

Revision Effective Date: Wednesday, October 7, 2020

***This order goes into effect
Saturday, October 3, 2020, at 12:01 am
and expires
Wednesday, December 2, 2020, at 11:59 pm.***

Please read this Public Health Order carefully.

WHEREAS, Public Health is the science and art of protecting and improving the health of people and their communities. Ensuring health security is the fundamental duty and responsibility of government at all levels – federal, state and local; and

WHEREAS, on March 19, 2020, Bayfield County declared an emergency relating to the COVID-19 pandemic; and

WHEREAS, all 50 states in the United States, a substantial number of tribal governments as well as the Federal Government have declared an emergency relating to the COVID-19 pandemic; and

WHEREAS, COVID-19 is a highly contagious virus, spread easily by airborne, droplet or contact transmission, from often asymptomatic hosts, to multiple recipients. Although this virus is the most deadly or dangerous to the elderly, and to those with underlying chronic health conditions, there is now solid evidence that otherwise healthy people with even mild COVID-19 cases are suffering from unusually high rates of significant heart, lung and neurologic damage. Otherwise healthy people also die from the disease; and



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WHEREAS, according to the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the *more* people an individual interacts with at a gathering and the longer that interaction lasts, the higher the potential risk of becoming infected with COVID-19 and COVID-19 spreading. There is a higher risk of COVID-19 spreading with larger in-person gatherings where it is difficult for individuals to remain spaced at least 6 feet apart; and

WHEREAS, spectator events, such as with interscholastic competitions and community sporting events, bring together a large number of different families as well as people from a wide variety of geographic locations; and

WHEREAS, thousands of large gatherings - including spectator events such as sports competitions - nationwide have resulted in large outbreaks of COVID-19 infections; and

WHEREAS, on July 17, 2020, Ashland and Bayfield County Public Health jointly issued an Emergency Advisory strongly discouraging any large events or gatherings; and

WHEREAS, since issuing this Emergency Order, we have continued to see incidences of large gatherings in Bayfield County that exceed what is determined to be a reasonable number of attendees, despite strong recommendations against large gatherings; and

WHEREAS, on September 4, 2020, Bayfield County Public Health issued a Public Health Order imposing a countywide restriction on public gatherings to prevent the spread of COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, as over the past 30 days, we have seen our number of Bayfield County COVID-19 cases double. Bayfield County has seen an increase in positive cases for COVID-19 associated with Bayfield County schools and within the last 14 days, several area schools have closed; and

WHEREAS, many COVID-19 infected individuals have absolutely no symptoms or only mild symptoms for which they never seek medical attention. Therefore, the actual number of infected and exposed individuals is grossly underestimated by local testing; and

WHEREAS, Bayfield County is home to a significant population considered medically vulnerable and at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19; this includes older adults (i.e. 65 years of age and older) and child or adult with conditions such as cancer, chronic kidney disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, immunocompromised state, obesity, serious heart conditions, or type II diabetes mellitus; and

WHEREAS, Bayfield County is considered a one hundred percent rural county, and there are several demographic, environmental, economic and social factors that put rural residents at higher risk of death to COVID-19 from these public health conditions. Rural areas have higher rates of pre-existing and underlying health conditions, are more likely to work in low wage jobs without the ability to work remotely, and have a limited healthcare infrastructure; and



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WHEREAS, the state of our emergency services and healthcare infrastructure of Bayfield County is limited and easily strained even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. There is no hospital in Bayfield County to accommodate increases in COVID-19 cases when neighboring hospitals see a surge in COVID-19 cases regionally. Furthermore, local ambulance and fire services rely heavily on volunteers—many of whom are retired, older adults—and any local outbreak jeopardizes the health of our volunteer emergency responders and threatens public safety by limiting the capacity to safely and effectively respond; and

WHEREAS, families in Bayfield County rely upon schools remaining open for a tradition, in-person education for their children; families in northern Wisconsin often do not have the option to work remotely from home in order to meet the demands of a virtual education for their children; and

WHEREAS, local increases in COVID-19 in Bayfield County are threatening the ability of the schools to remain open for in-person K-12 education.

WHEREAS, school closures would present an economic hardship to Bayfield County residents and threaten the livelihood of parents with school-age children; and

WHEREAS, when school closures occur, parents are often faced with difficult decisions regarding childcare. Supervision and care of school-age children often falls to the responsibility of other non-household family members, which further promotes the spread of COVID-19 in communities; and

WHEREAS, this Order comes after the release of substantial guidance from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the World Health Organization, and other public health officials throughout the United States and around the world; and

WHEREAS, it is the local Health Officer's statutory responsibility to do what is reasonable and necessary to prevent, suppress and control communicable diseases and to forbid public gatherings when deemed necessary;

NOW, THEREFORE, pursuant to Wisconsin Statute Section 252.03(2),

THE PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICER OF BAYFIELD COUNTY ORDERS THE FOLLOWING:

I. Effective as of 12:01 am on Saturday, October 3, 2020, and continuing for sixty (60) days until Wednesday, December 2, 2020, 11:59 pm, in-person interscholastic competitions and spectator events, as defined below, are hereby prohibited in Bayfield County, Wisconsin.

2. DEFINITIONS:

For purposes of this Order, an “Interscholastic Activities” is defined as competition between multiple academic institutions (or schools). This could include team sports played between schools, or representative of different schools, especially secondary schools. It also includes interscholastic competitions such as spelling bees, quiz bowls, and forensic competitions between schools, or representative of different schools. A “Spectator” is defined as a person who looks on or watches; onlooker; observer; or fan. A person who is present at and views a sporting practice or competition. “COVID-19 Prevention Practices” includes, but is not limited to: frequent handwashing, proper cough/sneezing etiquette, physical/social distancing of six (6) feet or more, wearing a facemask. “Close proximity” is defined as a person within six (6) feet or less of another non-household individual.

3. EXEMPTIONS

The situations listed below are exempt from this order so long as guidelines from the CDC are implemented. **All activities in this section must abide by the Bayfield Countywide Restriction on Public Gatherings.**

Exemptions apply to:

- (i) Courts and fields are open for exercise or practice;
- (ii) Practices, scrimmages, and team meetings between students enrolled in the same academic institution (or school) is allowed;
 - a. Schools are encouraged to limit the number of students participating and to follow their cohorting system.
 - b. Spectators are discouraged but could be allowed during outdoor practices or scrimmages.
- (iii) Virtual interscholastic competitions are encouraged and allowed.
- (iv) Outdoor, non-contact competitions (ex. Cross-country, track and field, golf) in which physical distancing of six (6) feet or greater can be maintained are allowed as long as the following conditions are met:
 - a. All schools participating must have a COVID-19 prevention plan for the specific activity. This plan should include:
 - i. A description of the screening process for all athletes (from both Bayfield County schools and out-of-jurisdiction schools) to be screened for COVID-19 symptoms prior to being allowed to play.
 - ii. Instructions for athletes and staff on how they must wear a facemask, covering or buff whenever in Close Proximity to other athletes.
 - iii. Considerations or plans for a staggered start/finish in order to promote physical distancing between athletes.
 - b. No staff or athletes who have any COVID-19 symptoms or current COVID-19 infection are allowed to attend or participate in the event.

- c. The number of staff attending the event should be kept to the minimum necessary for holding the event.
- d. No spectators are allowed to attend the event.
- e. A virtual awards ceremony is recommended in place of a traditional in-person ceremony.
- (v) Other outdoor, contact sports (ex. Football, baseball) and non-contact sports in which physical distancing of six feet or greater (ex. Volleyball) cannot be maintained are not allowed at this time.
- (vi) Schools must work with their bus or transportation companies to have a COVID-19 prevention plan in place to protect the health of drivers, students and coaches when transporting teams to-and-from locations for practice, scrimmages, or games.
- (vii) All of the above exemptions should follow COVID-19 Prevention Practices.

4. VIOLATIONS

Individuals or entities organizing or attending an interscholastic competition in violation of this order may be subject to penalties under Bayfield County Ordinance Title 5, Chapter 9, of not less than \$200 and not more than \$500 for each violation.

5. PURPOSE & RATIONALE

This Order is issued based on evidence of increasing transmission of COVID-19 within Bayfield County, scientific evidence regarding the most effective approaches to slow the transmission of communicable diseases generally and COVID-19 specifically, and best practices as currently known and available to protect members of the public from avoidable risk of serious illness or death resulting from exposure to COVID-19. Although most people who contract COVID-19 do not become seriously ill, people with mild symptoms and asymptomatic people with COVID-19 place all vulnerable members of their family, their coworkers, their neighbors, at risk for life threatening disease. Also, previously thought to be a benign disease in otherwise healthy people, there is a growing body of evidence that even among those who have experienced a mild case of COVID-19, there are very high rates of long-lasting heart, lung and/or neurologic disease.

Furthermore, this Order will reduce the likelihood that many people will be exposed to COVID-19 at a single event and will thereby slow the spread of COVID-19 within Bayfield County. By reducing the spread of COVID-19, this Order will help preserve critical and limited healthcare capacity that is available to residents in Bayfield County.

Moreover, this Order is issued to prevent circumstances often present at interscholastic competitions that may accelerate the spread of COVID-19, such as: the increased likelihood that interscholastic competitions will attract students and spectators from broad geographic areas who could be infected; the prolonged time period in which large numbers of people are in close proximity and could be exposed to COVID-19; and the difficulty in tracing exposure when large numbers of people attend a single event.



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Additionally, Bayfield County families are suffering from the economic hardship which efforts to prevent COVID-19 spread have caused. Bayfield County families and children desperately need schools to be able to safely reopen. Failing to control the spread of the virus will only prolong the economic hardship by prolonging inability to open schools. Virtual learning burdens fall heavily on parents, making efforts to return to normal productivity in their work life extremely difficult.

6. TERMS OF UNDERSTANDING

Schools must use this sixty (60) days to develop a COVID-19 Prevention Plan for each individual interscholastic activity and/or spectator event. Schools are encouraged to partner with Bayfield County Health Department and other Bayfield County schools to develop their COVID-19 Prevention Plans to ensure the safety of all students and staff participating in interscholastic activities and to promote a strong, consistent county-wide approach to preventing the spread of COVID-19 within our communities. School districts should submit COVID-19 Prevention Plans for each interscholastic category (i.e. basketball games, football games, spelling bees, etc.) to Bayfield County Health Department for approval.

Voluntary cancelation of non-scholastic sporting competitions that bring together many communities beyond the requirements of this Public Health Order is strongly encouraged at this time.

The intent of this order is to temporarily prohibit interscholastic competitions and spectator events to reduce community transmission of COVID-19 while we continue to see an upward trajectory of new cases, school-associated cases, and school closures due to COVID-19 outbreaks. Additionally, the purpose of this order is to allow time for schools to develop COVID-19 prevention plans specific to each interscholastic activity while enabling essential services to continue, to protect our school-age children as they return to traditional, in-person school or a combination of in-person and virtual school attendance, to protect our elderly population and medically vulnerable, and to be protective of the long-term viability of our economy in Bayfield County. In consideration of the current upward trajectory in new COVID-19 cases, school-associated COVID-19 cases and school closures, and the anticipated peak of COVID-19 cases in northern Wisconsin, sixty (60) days has been determined as an appropriate timeframe. The Public Health Officer will continue to assess this quickly evolving situation and may modify this Public Health Order to be more or less restrictive of Interscholastic Competitions and Spectator Events, or issue additional Orders related to COVID-19, or cancel this and other orders.

Revised this 7th day of October, 2020

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sara Wartman".

Sara Wartman, Health Director/Health Officer
Bayfield County Health Department