

E D U C A T I O N

# Schools recommend voluntary quarantine

*Area schools recommend students, staff isolate after travel*

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TRAVERSE CITY — If Thanksgiving travel was game one of stay-at-home vs. hit-the-road, Christmas and New Year’s is going to be a doubleheader.

Despite pleas from health experts and government officials to avoid traveling for Thanksgiving, millions of Americans took to the highways or the air to visit family and friends, according to data from the Transportation Security Administration and SafeGraph, which monitors movement by tracking cell-phone data.

In the two weeks following Thanksgiving, the predictions from health experts are coming true: positive cases and deaths are reaching record highs.

Some area school officials are trying to keep those rising rates out of their hallways by putting policies in place that students and staff members who travel shift to virtual instruction and



Record-Eagle/Mike Krebs

**A teacher escorts a student to their car at The Children’s House in Traverse City on Thursday.**

voluntarily quarantine for 10 to 14 days, per guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Although health officials say the coronavirus does not seem to be spreading within school walls, the majority of confirmed cases among students and staff have been traced back to

activities outside of school, Dr. Joshua Meyerson, the medical director of the Health Department of Northwest Michigan, previously said.

Michele Shane is the head of school at the Children’s House Montessori School in Traverse City, where they have a 10-day, post-travel quarantine policy. Shane said quarantines are applied on a case-by-case basis, but “especially if there’s air travel involved.”

Shane said the policy is not a “hard-and-fast rule, but it’s pretty much being applied across the board.” People understand the policy, and Shane said some have quarantined themselves following a trip.

“They’re staying out to keep people safe,” Shane said, adding that people can return to campus on the 11th day if they have not exhibited any COVID-19 symptoms.

People can also submit a negative test to return, but Shane said without the availability of rapid testing in the area that most travelers cannot get tested and get test results quick enough to “test out of quarantine.” Shane said there have been no issues so far.

Children’s House families

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## “There’s nothing legally binding about it, but it’s just community acknowledgment of the collective common good.”

Michele Shane, Children’s House Montessori School



Record-Eagle/Mike Krebs

Students are dismissed from The Children’s House in Traverse City on Thursday.

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were also asked to sign a pledge stating they “must all do our part to keep our children, staff and families safe and healthy during this pandemic.”

“There’s nothing legally binding about it, but it’s just community acknowledgment of the collective common good,” Shane

said. “We believe that the best place for children to learn, hands down, is face to face — and in order to make that happen we’re asking our community to make sacrifices.”

The Children’s House has escaped any COVID-19 closures since summer programming began in June.

“Something is working,” Shane said. “The community understands the value of making a sacrifice.”

Other school officials are taking note.

The Old Mission Peninsula School Board of Education passed a

policy at its last meeting that recommends students and staff members quarantine for 14 days after traveling and/or experiencing large groups.

Danielle Clayton, acting principal at Old Mission, said they cannot legally require a quarantine because OMPS is a public charter school.

She said the recommendation has variables and flexibilities that recognize if a person only drove in their car to a certain place and stayed in one household while there.

“It’s kind of a tricky situation,” Clayton said.

Rebecca Schubert, whose son and daughter go to OMPS, is in favor of the safety measure.

“Every precaution is so critical, right now,” Schubert said. “If cases were going down, it would be a different story. But cases aren’t going down. We’re exploding.”

Schubert believes all schools should follow the lead of the Children’s House and Old Mission.

“We’re in the middle of a pandemic,” she said. “Embrace something like this now and know the end result is going to be far better than if you ignore it.”