



## **Joint Statement on COVID-19 in Alachua County Public Schools October 29, 2020**

**Below is a joint statement from Alachua County Public Schools and the Alachua County Health Department, in cooperation with the Scientific Medical Advisory Council, regarding COVID-19 in local schools:**

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, Alachua County Public Schools and the Alachua County Health Department have worked closely to limit the spread of the virus in local public schools. Their efforts include a rigorous testing procedure for students and staff who have symptoms or have had significant contact with a positive COVID-19 case in a school and rapid contact tracing.

To promote their efforts, both the district and the Health Department have collaborated on a daily basis with the [Scientific Medical Advisory Committee \(SMAC\)](#), a team of medical professionals from the University of Florida with expertise in pediatrics, infectious diseases, and environmental and global health.

The protocols the district follows in addressing an active COVID-19 case in a school, including quarantine guidelines, testing timelines, and return to school protocols, were all developed in collaboration with the SMAC and are updated based on SMAC recommendations. The SMAC also developed the criteria for determining when a classroom/school should be closed due to COVID.

SMAC members review all COVID cases in the district on a daily basis and advise the district on steps that need to be taken to limit spread. SMAC also meets weekly to discuss trends in the data and consider adjustments to protocols.

Currently both the SMAC and the Health Department confirm that there are primarily individual cases in elementary and middle schools, with increased numbers in the high schools related to sports teams. To date, there has been minimal to no in-classroom transmission in the schools. A majority of cases in the district have been traced to team sports and social events outside of school. In keeping with recommendations from the medical experts, entire sports teams have been quarantined when there is a positive case.

Under the protocols, an entire class would be quarantined if there were three or more positive cases within a 14-day period in that class. To date, only one classroom at Gainesville High School has been quarantined based on this metric. That occurred as the result of a positive test result received yesterday (October 28). However, all but five students from that class had already been quarantined due to significant contact with a positive case. In fact, many positive cases at schools are actually identified during the quarantine period and as a result of contact tracing and testing conducted by the Health Department at local schools.

The number of cases at GHS and all other schools in Alachua County Public Schools do not currently meet the SMAC criteria for closing an entire school. Such a step would be taken if 10% of all classes in a middle or high school or three or more classes in an elementary school were closed due to quarantines and after consultation with the SMAC.

All protocols can be found on the district's COVID-19 webpage at:

<https://fl02219191.schoolwires.net/Page/30007>

Alachua County Public Schools, the Alachua County Health Department and the Scientific Medical Advisory Committee will continue to work closely to promote the health and safety of students, staff and the broader community.