Updates in Quarantine Duration of Close Contacts to a COVID-19 Case

The Washtenaw County Health Department (WCHD) previously adopted a 14-day quarantine effective 4/6/21 as mandated by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) Michigan Health Alert Network (MIHAN) “MDHHS - Important Guidance Updates in Case Investigation, Contact Tracing and Quarantine”.

Given the recent MIHAN guidance “IMPORTANT: MDHHS Clarification of Quarantine Guidance” dated 4/12/2021 that allows flexibility for Local Health Departments to implement a 10 day quarantine period, WCHD is reverting to the 10 day quarantine period effective 4/28/2021. The quarantine guidelines are the following:

While the standard fourteen-day quarantine period remains, individuals have an opportunity to reduce that to ten days provided:

- The individual does not develop any symptoms or clinical evidence of COVID-19 infection during daily symptom monitoring for the 10 days after the last exposure; and,
- Daily symptom monitoring continues through day 14 after the last exposure.

Based on individual assessment, public health may continue to require individuals to quarantine for the full 14 days per existing CDC recommendations. The fourteen day option most greatly mitigates the possibility of post-quarantine transmission and continues to be the strategy with the most evidence for reducing risk to others at present.

Thus, for the majority of close contacts, if the individual meets the above criteria, they can discontinue quarantine after 10 days after the last exposure.

Certain vulnerable populations and settings may still require a 14-day quarantine. It is at the discretion of WCHD health officer and/or WCHD medical director to implement a 14-day quarantine when appropriate.

Rationale for the decision:
Although the 14 day quarantine period is most effective, the additional quarantine period is a burden on close contacts and their families. As with everything in public health, there is a harm – benefit to all decisions. This is well summarized by the CDC guidelines “Quarantine is intended to reduce the risk that infected persons might unknowingly transmit infection to others. It also ensures that persons who become symptomatic or are otherwise diagnosed during quarantine can be rapidly brought to care and evaluated. However, a 14-day quarantine can impose personal burdens that may affect physical and mental health as well as cause economic hardship that may reduce compliance. Implementing quarantines can also pose additional burdens on public health systems and communities, especially
during periods when new infections, and consequently the number of contacts needing to quarantine, are rapidly rising. Lastly, the prospect of quarantine may dissuade recently diagnosed persons from naming contacts and may dissuade contacts from responding to contact tracer outreach if they perceive the length of quarantine as onerous.

Reducing the length of quarantine will reduce the burden and may increase community compliance... Shortening quarantine may increase willingness to adhere to public health recommendations but will require evaluation; not only in terms of compliance with quarantine and contact tracing activities, but also for any potential negative impacts such as post-quarantine transmission.”


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