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Some Merced County Schools Can Remain Open in Purple Tier

To: All Media

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Gov. Newsom on Monday moved dozens of counties into the state's most restrictive Purple Tier, including Merced County. Tier assignments, which are based on countywide metrics, have traditionally come on Tuesdays, with changes made based on two weeks of data. Facing an unprecedented surge in COVID-19 cases, Gov. Newsom said he was "pulling an emergency brake."

This affects many local businesses and restricts dining, fitness centers and places of worship from holding indoor activities, among restrictions to other businesses.

For more information on businesses and activities in the tiered system under the Blueprint for a Safer Economy, visit:

https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/CDPH%20Document%20Library/COVID-19/Dimmer-Framework-September_2020.pdf

Now that Merced County is back in the Purple Tier, schools and districts that had already reopened are permitted to continue with in-person instruction according to state and local regulations. However, individual schools that have not yet reopened will need to wait until the county moves back to the less restrictive Red Tier and stays there for 14 consecutive days.

Some schools were already in the midst of phased reopenings, starting with lower grades first. Individual schools that opened some of their grades while Merced County was in the Red Tier will be allowed to open additional grades even while the county is in the Purple Tier. However, schools that did not resume in-person instruction while the county was in the Red Tier cannot reopen while the county is in the Purple Tier. These schools will continue to serve their students with distance learning.

While schools that have reopened for in-person learning will not be required to close at this time, schools must close a classroom, school or an entire school district based on the following criteria:

- A classroom must be closed when there is one positive case in a classroom
- A school must close if there are multiple classes or 5 percent of the student/staff have confirmed cases
- An entire school district must be closed when 25 percent of the schools within the district has closed due to COVID-19.

MCOE will continue to collaborate with the school district superintendents, the Merced County Department of Public Health to provide services to students and families across the county. The best place to learn about local school plans is to contact them directly. A list of school districts and contact information is located at www.mcoe.org/schooldistricts.

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