

August 3, 2021

Dear School Leaders,

In follow up to our meeting last week and as we continue to see cases and pandemic risk indicators trending up, Dr. Meyerson and I wanted to share some additional resources and information regarding the layered prevention strategies that have been recommended by state and national authorities. Recently, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) updated its recommendations in several areas:

- The first was a modification to their Guidance for Prevention of COVID-19 in K-12 Schools and Early Childhood/Child Care Settings, recommending universal masking indoors at all school facilities and events, for students, teachers, staff and all school visitors, regardless of vaccination status. In addition, masks are required for students and staff when riding the school bus or any school-sponsored transportation system.
- The guidance for schools continues to focus on prioritizing in-person learning for students and provides recommendations for schools in layering prevention strategies as community and school transmission levels change. The change in recommendations for masking is an instance of “dialing up” of prevention strategies in response to an increase in transmission risk due to widespread circulation of the Delta variant. View the updated CDC guidance [here](#).
- In a K-12 indoor classroom setting where all students are using masks and other prevention strategies are in place, students who were within 3-feet or more of an infected student are exempt from quarantine.
- The CDC also released a recommendation that all people, regardless of vaccination status begin masking indoors in areas where CDC transmission levels are “substantial” or “high”. This county level data can be found on the CDC data tracker [here](#).
- The final recommendation was that anyone who has a close contact exposure (within 6 feet for 15 minutes or more) with someone testing positive for COVID-19 be tested within 3-5 days of exposure regardless of vaccination status or symptoms.

The CDC bases its recommendations on the latest data. When new data emerges, it may drive new guidance. When the CDC revised its guidance regarding masking in May, the Delta variant represented 1% of all cases. Today that number is more than 80%. This variant is known to be more transmissible, and many school-aged children remain unvaccinated and are at risk for COVID-19 infection and associated complications. In addition, it has been demonstrated that the implementation of layered preventative measures can minimize disruption from isolation and quarantine and maximize in-person learning that is critical to the future health of our children. **Therefore, we recommend that our local schools follow the current CDC guidance for starting the 2021-2022 school year with universal masking for students and staff in all school facilities.**

As we proceed through the year and see more of the impact of bringing together large numbers of both vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals in the school setting, and continue to monitor levels of community transmission, we will be here to assist you in “dialing up” or “dialing down” these preventative strategies to keep your students and staff safe. We expect the county data to change frequently, especially in smaller counties where changes in smaller numbers appear more dramatic. It will be difficult to effectively make recommendations or alert the public to these changes each day as they happen; therefore, we will be working on regional messaging aimed at empowering the

public to monitor their risk and take steps to protect themselves and those around them. In addition, at your request, we continue to offer school-based vaccination clinics for COVID-19 and other vaccines students may need.

We know this change in trends is disappointing and overwhelming. We also hope that it will only be temporary and that vaccination rates will rise to a level that is more protective of the community. To assist you with navigating what is recommended and required, [click here](#). Also forthcoming will be state and local toolkits designed to support you in implementing protective measures and keep your schools healthy!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lisa Peacock', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Lisa Peacock, MSN, MPH, RN, WHNP-BC
Health Officer

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joshua Meyerson', in a cursive style.

Dr. Joshua Meyerson, MD, MPH
Medical Director