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KCHD Statement for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools

July 23, 2021 (Updated 7/29/2021)

Kane County Health Department (KCHD) strongly supports recent (7/27/2021) CDC and IDPH guidance for school districts to begin the school year with universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, students and visitors in K-12 schools regardless of vaccination status. This update is based on the impact of the B.1.617.2 (Delta) variant.

The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) adopted the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) updated guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html>) on July 9, 2021.

The following prevention strategies are recommended for all K-12 Schools:

- Promoting vaccination
- Consistent and correct mask use
- Physical distancing
- Screening testing to promptly identify cases, clusters, and outbreaks
- Ventilation
- Handwashing and respiratory etiquette
- Staying home when sick and getting tested
- Contact tracing, in combination with isolation and quarantine
- Cleaning and disinfection

CDC continues to recommend masking and physical distancing in schools as key prevention strategies, particularly as COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations rise. Masks in schools will decrease the number of persons who must stay home and quarantine as a result of their close contact to a COVID-19 case. Masks should be worn indoors by all individuals (age 2 and older) regardless of vaccination status. Physical distancing at least 3 feet should be implemented whenever possible within classrooms.

KCHD acknowledges that local school districts and administrators have the final authority to determine return to school plans. School leaders and school districts should continue to closely monitor community transmission of COVID-19, vaccination coverage, screening testing, and outbreaks to lead decisions about the level of layered prevention strategies being implemented for in-person learning. The use of "should" in CDC Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 does not imply that a strategy is optional.

Many schools serve children under the age of 12 who are not eligible for vaccination at this time. Therefore, the CDC guidance emphasizes implementing layered prevention strategies (e.g., using multiple prevention strategies together consistently) to protect people who are not fully vaccinated, including students, teachers, staff, and other members of their households. Increase in vaccinations among students and staff can help support in-person learning and extra-curricular activities. Vaccination is the best defense to ending the COVID-19 pandemic. To schedule a COVID-19 vaccine appointment, visit <https://www.kanevax.org/>.

Schools should continue to work with KCHD to report cases for contact tracing; and, require isolation and quarantine as recommended for exposed or ill students. KCHD will continue to provide updated guidance aligned with CDC and IDPH to school leaders and school districts.

For more guidance, visit <https://www.kanehealth.com/Pages/COVID-Schools.aspx>.