

BEXAR County Health Authority

Health Advisory

Date October 1, 2021

Recognizing that open and safe schools are vital to community health, and that COVID-19 continues to present an ongoing public health threat due to the widely circulating and highly contagious Delta variant, the Local Health Authority for Bexar County and the City of San Antonio issues this Advisory and makes the following recommendations to all public and private schools (“Schools”) offering instruction to students in any grades from pre-kindergarten to 12th grade, effective immediately:

Recommendation for Universal Indoor Masking. Schools should follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations for all students (age 2 and older), staff, teachers, and visitors, regardless of vaccination status, to wear a well-fitting face mask in indoor public spaces.

CDC Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html>

CDC Guide to Masks:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/about-face-coverings.html>

Optional masking, while not recommended by the CDC, is safer after the Metro Health COVID dashboard drops to “Moderate” or below for at least four consecutive weeks, and at least three of the five following

Figure 1: Considerations for Masking

Considerations for indoor masking during the 2021-22 school year	
Factors that support masking:	Times during the school day when masking might be prioritized:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ When community incidence is high○ When substantial numbers of COVID-19 cases are being documented in the school○ When cases are growing among children in the community○ Low community or school-based vaccination coverage and/or access○ In settings that serve elementary school-aged children who are not yet eligible for vaccination○ When there are household members who remain vulnerable to severe disease from COVID-19 due to chronic illness or contraindication to vaccination○ For any unvaccinated child or adult with chronic illness that may make them more susceptible to severe disease	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ During transportation to and from school on buses or public transportation (Note: this is currently a federal requirement)○ During transitions between classes in hallways○ When a large group is unable to distance (e.g., in the cafeteria waiting to purchase lunch)○ For children returning to school with respiratory illnesses following a negative COVID-19 test, at least for the duration of symptoms○ For temporary use in classrooms that have been exposed to a contagious child or staff member○ For temporary use in a school with cases identified across multiple classrooms, in order to limit transmission over a two-week period

From Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia PolicyLab, accessible at <https://policylab.chop.edu/tools-and-memos/guidance-in-person-education-k-12-educational-settings>.

mitigation measures are in place for the affected group(s) or grade(s):

- [Good ventilation](#),
- Screening testing at least once a week,
- Cohorting,
- Robust contact tracing and quarantining, and/or
- Near-universal vaccination among those who are eligible.

In such an event, school healthcare settings, such as the school clinic or nurse's office, should continue universal masking. At "Severe" or "Critical" dashboard levels, universal masking should resume. Also see *Figure 1, Considerations for Masking*.

Recommendation for Contact Tracing & Quarantine. Schools should notify the student's parents or guardians when the school learns that a student was in [close contact](#), as defined by the CDC, with a COVID-19 positive individual on campus or during a school-related event.

CDC Guidance for Contact Tracing:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/contact-tracing.html>

Unlike in classrooms, in lunchrooms exposure within 6 feet is considered a close contact.

Unvaccinated individuals who are determined to be in close contact with a COVID-19 positive person should continue to follow CDC guidance and quarantine for 10-14 days after their last contact with a person who has COVID-19. If testing out of quarantine is used, the tests should be performed 5-7 days after the exposure. Students, staff, teachers, and visitors should remain off campus and not attend any school-sponsored events during their quarantine period.

CDC Guidance for When to Quarantine:


<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/quarantine.html>

Fully vaccinated individuals should get tested 3-5 days after their exposure even if they don't have symptoms and wear a mask in indoor school settings for 10-14 days. Fully vaccinated individuals need not quarantine.

Rapid antigen test results in close contacts and symptomatic individuals, if negative, should be confirmed with a PCR test.

I believe this advisory includes appropriate control measures based on current knowledge, including rapid spread of variants in schools, current lack of a COVID-19 vaccine for persons under age 12, and potential effects on adults, particularly the unvaccinated and immunocompromised, in students' households.

This advisory is issued under my authority as the Local Health Authority for Bexar County and the City of San Antonio on this the 1st day of October 2021.



C. Junda Woo, MD, MPH
Bexar County Health Authority