



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

For Immediate Release

August 9, 2021

Butler County General Health District, along with City of Hamilton Health Department, and City of Middletown Health Department release statement recommending universal masking in K-12 schools and universities

Public Health supports the notion that children and young adults need to be in their school classrooms learning face-to-face and socializing with their peers as much as possible—even when COVID-19 threatens.

As K-12 schools and universities prepare to start the new school year, Butler County General Health District, City of Hamilton Health Department, and City of Middletown Health Department support full in-person learning-- along with vaccinations, masks, social distancing and cleaning.

To facilitate and maximize keeping our students safe in the classroom, while also minimizing the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19, all three health departments strongly recommend schools follow guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), as well as local health districts and departments. All urge parents and schools to utilize universal masking for all students, teachers and staff, regardless of their vaccination status.

On a scale from low-moderate-substantial-high, Butler County has been designated by the CDC as a county of “substantial spread” of COVID-19. This certainly indicates a need to mask up to keep everyone safe. Children are germ carriers. Keeping them masked up in school will not only help to keep them safer, but will also keep their families safer from COVID-19 and other respiratory diseases such as flu and RSV.

CDC guidelines: Given new evidence on the B.1.617.2 (Delta) variant, CDC has updated the [guidance for fully vaccinated people](#). CDC recommends universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors to K-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status. Children should return to full-time in-person learning in the fall with layered prevention strategies in place. [Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools | CDC](#)

AAP guidelines: All students older than 2 years and all school staff should wear face masks at school (unless medical or developmental conditions prohibit use). ([COVID-19 Guidance for Safe Schools \(aap.org\)](#))

Our fight against COVID-19 is not over.

The Delta variant is here and it spreads more easily and makes people sicker than the other forms of COVID-19 we have seen before. Because the Delta variant spreads so quickly, schools need to implement all the tools they have to protect students, teachers and staff (and their families) in order to stay in-person.

Public Health guidelines from local, state and national authorities all call for a 4-pronged approach to keep children safe and in school:

- Vaccination (for those eligible)
- Masks (covering both nose and mouth, well fitted)
- Social distancing (3 feet or more, with 6 being the best, when possible)
- Cleaning (air and surfaces, and hands)

Vaccination is the most important of the four options, but not all children can receive the vaccine. Only around 50% of those in Butler County are vaccinated, therefore, masking, distancing and cleaning become imperative to help provide additional “layers” of prevention. This requires cooperation from parents.

Last year, an Ohio Department of Health study demonstrated that masks worked very well to keep our children as safe as possible from COVID-19, and to limit its spread. Children did well with masks last year and will do well with it this year. Keep kids in their seats- WEAR a MASK!

Local public health agencies strongly recommend that until this new Delta variant is suppressed and under control, and everyone who wants a vaccine gets one that **all staff and all students wear a mask when they are inside a building and while on buses. This is not an order but a data-derived, science-based strong recommendation.** The final decision on masks rests with the school board of each district, of course.

Viruses live to mutate and they mutate to live. Each time the virus replicates is another chance for a new stronger variant to form. Vaccination is our best option to stop COVID 19 in its tracks, however, because children under 12 do not have that option yet, and some 12 and older are not vaccinated, ALL in schools need to wear a mask.

In addition, all those eligible are urged to get vaccinated. You can locate a vaccine clinic at gettheshot.coronavirus.ohio.gov.

Public Health will continue to work with all Butler County schools as together we closely monitor this ever evolving situation.

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City of Hamilton Health Department – 513-785-7080

City of Middletown Health Department- 513-425-1818

