



**Joint Statement from Orange County Public Health Officer, Dr. Clayton Chau and
Orange County Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Al Mijares**

Updated CDPH Guidance for Schools and Universal Mask Requirements

July 16, 2021

Over the past weeks, guidelines have been issued at the federal and state level regarding indoor mask-wearing requirements for students and staff in schools. While the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) published K-12 school guidance for the 2021-22 school year, in the United States health is a function of each state and each state has the authority to determine and implement its own guidance. The new California Department of Public Health (CDPH) guidance released on Monday, July 12, 2021 states “K- 12 students are required to mask indoors, with exemptions per CDPH face-mask guidance” and that “adults in K-12 school settings are required to mask when sharing indoor spaces with students”. Universal masking is also required on buses and during field trips that are indoors regardless of vaccination status. Students will no longer be required to wear masks outdoors, including athletic events. All Orange County schools must follow the regulations requiring universal masking indoors for students and staff in TK-12 schools to begin the 2021-22 school year and until guidance is subsequently revised.

The CDPH guidance affirms that universal mask wearing is one of the most effective and simple mitigation strategies to prevent in-school transmission of COVID-19 and support full time in-person instruction. Universal masking also reduces the frequency of required quarantine, further promoting more in-person instructional time for students. Consistent with guidance from the 20-21 school year, districts must develop and implement local protocols to enforce the mask requirements. Students who do not comply with universal mask wearing guidance may be placed in an alternative learning setting.

CDPH guidelines state that in-person instruction can occur without physical distancing when universal masking is in place. This will enable students to return to a traditional full-day academic model, which is positive news for learning and for students, families and staff, who want five-days per week of in-person instruction. Without universal masking in place, K-12 schools would only be able to implement hybrid schedules, similar to the last school year.

The CDPH stated that it will continue to assess conditions and will determine no later than November 1 whether to update or eliminate mask requirements or recommendations. In the meantime, requiring students and staff to wear masks while indoors at school, regardless of vaccination status, will remain in effect.

In summary, the Orange County Health Care Agency, the Orange County Department of Education, and all local boards and schools in Orange County must implement and enforce the mandates required by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) in the [new K-12 school guidance](#). The Orange County Health Care Agency, the Orange County Department of Education, nor local school boards or schools may implement policies that are less restrictive than the mandates required by CDPH which are enforceable under the California Emergency Services Act, Government Code 8665 .