

October 8 Vaccination and Masking Update

As we reported last week, Governor Newsom announced a new mandate last week that would require all students ages 12 to 17 to be vaccinated against COVID-19 once the FDA approves of those vaccinations. Over the last week, we have conferred with other districts in the county, our public health partners, and legal counsel about how this mandate might be implemented. Although we haven't received a lot more information, we do want to emphasize that we are exploring a number of issues related to the mandate, including when it is expected to go into effect, how best to collect vaccination confirmation from families, and what options we will need to provide for students whose families choose not to vaccinate their children.

In the meantime, we have now fully implemented the vaccination mandate for employees that Governor Newsom announced in mid-August. That mandate requires school employees to either show proof of full vaccination or be tested weekly for COVID-19 by October 15. We have gathered proof of vaccination from about 90 percent of our employees, communicated the state's testing requirement to the other 10 percent, and set up weekly reminders for that testing. Employees who do not comply with the weekly testing may face disciplinary action, including being placed on unpaid leave of absence.

On Thursday, the Bay Area Health Officers released their criteria for lifting COVID-19 masking requirements. The full criteria are listed in this [Alameda County Public Health Department press release](#). We'd like to emphasize that **these criteria do not apply to schools**. The California Department of Public Health is responsible for school masking mandates and is expected to release updated guidance on November 1. As a reminder, research shows that masking provides powerful protection against COVID-19 and has been implemented in order to keep our youngest children, especially, safe from COVID-19, as they cannot be vaccinated. Masking has also been implemented to help keep COVID-19 transmission rates low so that we can continue to keep our schools open for in-person instruction. We expect to have more updates on masking requirements in several weeks.

Finally, we are aware that Pfizer has announced it will be meeting with the FDA to discuss granting emergency use authorization (EUA) for immunizing children ages 5 to 12 against COVID-19. The meeting is set for October 26, and we do not know quickly that EUA will be granted. Once it is granted, however, we are committed to working with the Alameda County Office of Education to set up more clinics to help families get their children vaccinated as quickly as possible.