



Oregon Pediatric Society

A Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics



OREGON ACADEMY OF
FAMILY PHYSICIANS

MAKING HEALTH PRIMARY

POLICY STATEMENT on UNIVERSAL MASKING AT SCHOOLS

[July 29, 2021] The Oregon Pediatric Society (OPS), state chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), and the Oregon Academy of Family Physicians (OAFP) strongly advocate for in-person learning in K-12 classrooms, while taking disease-preventing pandemic safety measures. To keep kids healthy and prevent quarantines, we urge Oregon's school districts to follow the Governor's July 29 masking directive and mandate universal masking inside schools immediately.

On July 27, 2021, the Centers for Disease Control released guidance that all students, teachers, and staff at K-12 schools should wear face masks, even if they are vaccinated, matching [AAP guidance](#). On the same day, the Oregon Health Authority recommended that everyone inside a public, indoor space should wear masks, regardless of vaccine status.

COVID-19 vaccines are not yet authorized for children under 12, and many teenagers have yet to get vaccinated. As the especially virulent Delta variant spreads, particularly in areas where vaccination rates are low, kids remain unprotected against the virus and at increased risk for COVID's worst health outcomes.

Scientific evidence shows that face masks effectively control the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus and its variants. In addition to protecting students or staff who cannot be vaccinated, universal masking enables fair and consistent application of safety protocols without the added burden of teachers needing to monitor vaccination status. In the absence of universal masking, kids may be tempted to take off their masks or could be ostracized. "I worry that some students will be singled out for wearing masks at school, and this can lead to bullying and peer pressure to unmask, even when it's not safe to do so," says OPS member and pediatric infectious disease specialist Dr. Judith Guzman-Cottrill. Masking is also an excellent way to decrease the spread of the flu and other respiratory illnesses.

The AAP reports that since late June 2021, COVID cases in kids and youth are climbing each week: more than 62,000 confirmed national cases in children the past two weeks, for a cumulative pandemic total of 4.1 million. In Oregon as of July 21, 47% of youth ages 12-17 have received at least one COVID vaccine dose.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Julie Scholz, OPS Executive Director, julie.scholz@oraap.org
Betsy Boyd-Flynn, OAFP Executive Director, bbf@oafp.org