



Superintendent's UPDATE

Thursday, April 21, 2022

COVID-19 School and Vaccination Update

Dear San Mateo County Education and Child Care Community,

After a short hiatus with schools enjoying spring breaks, the *COVID-19 School and Vaccination Update* has returned. Much has happened over the past month, so let's get caught up.

COVID-19 Cases in Schools

After a brief pause, cases of COVID have wiggled their way up slightly across the county and in schools. Schools experiencing cases are mostly reporting small numbers. However, a few districts have experienced higher numbers across multiple campuses or in response to large indoor events, like prom. The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) continues to strongly recommend masks in schools, and our education leaders are doing all they can to encourage staff and families to follow that recommendation and end the school year strong, healthy, and in class.

Vaccination Mandates for Schools Postponed

CDPH announced on April 14th that COVID vaccinations will not be required for in-person attendance in schools until at least July 1, 2023. In its announcement, CDPH noted that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has not yet fully approved COVID vaccines for all students in the 7-12 grade span. Full approval by the FDA was a precondition to beginning the process of adding COVID to the list of vaccinations – including measles, mumps, and rubella – required for in-person school attendance. On April 14th, State Senator Richard Pan also pulled his bill which would have required COVID vaccinations and eliminated the personal belief exemption.

Continuing Quarantine's Long Good-Bye

As of April 6th, CDPH no longer recommends quarantine for individuals who are exposed to COVID and have no symptoms. The previous recommendation was for a minimum five-day quarantine after exposure, regardless of symptoms. This new recommendation aligns with CDPH's guidance for schools which allows asymptomatic exposed students, regardless of their COVID vaccination status or location of exposure, to continue to take part in all aspects of K-12 schooling, including sports and extracurricular activities. Exposed students should wear a well-fitting mask indoors around others for at least 10 days and get tested within 3-5 days after last exposure, unless they had COVID within the last 90 days.

Over-the-Counter COVID Tests

CDPH is making free at-home COVID antigen tests available for public, charter, and private schools. Districts and schools may request the tests every week using [this form](#). Please note that availability may be limited at times.

In addition to the tests provided to schools and districts, CDPH encourages families to buy test kits for their homes to be prepared for when they might need them. At least through the end of the summer, all health insurance providers must pay for up to eight COVID tests per person per month.

Safe Events this Spring

On April 1st, CDPH released a [Safe and SMART Events Playbook](#) to help schools and communities plan COVID-safe events. While the guidance for schools is not new, it provides some good reminders as we move into spring and end-of-school events, including the following: host activities outdoors whenever possible; separate the event into smaller cohorts (by grade, for example) whenever possible; promote vaccines for all eligible attendees; consider pre-entry testing for all unvaccinated attendees at or just prior to the event; consider requiring the use of masks at school-based large, crowded indoor events; and if food or drinks are to be served, serve them outdoors whenever possible and/or place them away from other areas to clearly designate spaces where masks should be worn.

Vaccination Numbers and Opportunities

As of this week, 62.7 percent of children ages 5-11 have received two doses of vaccine, up from 61.1 percent four weeks ago. The vaccination rate for youth ages 12-15 was up slightly from 82.3 to 82.6 percent. The booster rate for this age group climbed from 40.2 to 42.1 percent. Continued messaging about the safety and effectiveness of vaccines can help increase these percentages.

Ample vaccination opportunities are available, including weekly clinics in South San Francisco, Daly City, San Mateo, Half Moon Bay, Redwood City, and East Palo Alto. More information can be found on the [SMC Health website](#). The CDPH is looking for partners to host pop-up vaccination clinics for at least 100 people, so if your school or child care site is interested, please contact the CDPH School Vaccination Team at SchoolVaxTeam@cdph.ca.gov to learn more or sign up. This could be a wonderful addition to an outdoor event.

I plan to send out this *COVID-19 School and Vaccination Update* on the third Thursday of the month. Unless we have urgent news to share before then, you can expect the next edition on May 19th.

Thank you all for your work to support our students and schools.



Nancy Magee
San Mateo County Superintendent of Schools

Please note: A copy of this letter in Spanish will be [posted here](#) shortly.