



Division of Governmental Relations

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February 28, 2022

MEMORANDUM

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TO: RCOE Cabinet
District Superintendents
Chief Business Officials
Personnel Administrators
Instructional Leaders
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Network to Improve Student Outcomes
Assessment Network
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FROM: Division of Governmental Relations

RE: Governor Newsom, CDPH Announce Revised K-12 School Guidance

Riverside County K-12 School Districts

Alvord USD
Banning USD
Beaumont USD
Coachella Valley USD
Corona-Norco USD
Desert Center USD
Desert Sands USD
Hemet USD
Jurupa USD
Lake Elsinore USD
Menifee Union SD
Moreno Valley USD
Murrieta Valley USD
Nuview Union SD
Palm Springs USD
Palo Verde USD
Perris Elem. SD
Perris Union High SD
Riverside USD
Romoland SD
San Jacinto USD
Temecula Valley USD
Val Verde USD

Today, the Newsom Administration announced updates to statewide guidance regarding the use of masks as a means to mitigate the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

At 11 a.m., a joint statement was released by the Governors of California, Oregon and Washington:

Governors Newsom, Brown and Inslee Announce Updated Health Guidance

Published: Feb 28, 2022

SACRAMENTO – With declining case rates and hospitalizations across the West, California, Oregon and Washington are moving together to update their masking guidance. After 11:59 p.m. on March 11, California, Oregon and Washington will adopt new indoor mask policies and move from mask requirements to mask recommendations in schools. State policies do not change federal requirements, which still include masks on public transit.

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Statement from California Governor Gavin Newsom: “California continues to adjust our policies based on the latest data and science, applying what we’ve learned over the past two years to guide our response to the pandemic. Masks are an effective tool to minimize spread of the virus and future variants, especially when transmission rates are high. We cannot predict the future of the virus, but we are better prepared for it and will continue to take measures rooted in science to keep California moving forward.”

In California, starting March 1, masks will no longer be required for unvaccinated individuals, but will be strongly recommended for all individuals in most indoor settings. After March 11, in schools and child care facilities, masks will not be required but will be strongly recommended [*emphasis added*]. Masks will still be required for everyone in high transmission settings like public transit, emergency shelters, health care settings, correctional facilities, homeless shelters and long-term care facilities. As always, local jurisdictions may have additional requirements beyond the state guidance.

Statement from Oregon Governor Kate Brown: “Two years ago today, we identified Oregon’s first case of COVID-19. As has been made clear time and again over the last two years, COVID-19 does not stop at state borders or county lines. On the West Coast, our communities and economies are linked. Together, as we continue to recover from the Omicron surge, we will build resiliency and prepare for the next variant and the next pandemic. As we learn to live with this virus, we must remain vigilant to protect each other and prevent disruption to our schools, businesses, and communities—with a focus on protecting our most vulnerable and the people and communities that have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.”

In Oregon, the Oregon Health Authority rules requiring masks in indoor public places and schools will be lifted after 11:59 p.m. on March 11. Other state and federal requirements, such as those for health care settings, public transit, and other specialized settings, will remain in place for a period of time.

Statement from Washington Governor Jay Inslee: “We’ve continued to monitor data from our state Department of Health, and have determined we are able to adjust the timing of our statewide mask requirement. While this represents another step forward for Washingtonians, we must still be mindful that many within our communities remain vulnerable. Many businesses and families will continue choosing to wear masks, because we’ve learned how effective they are at keeping one another safe. As we transition to this next phase, we will continue to move forward together carefully and cautiously.”

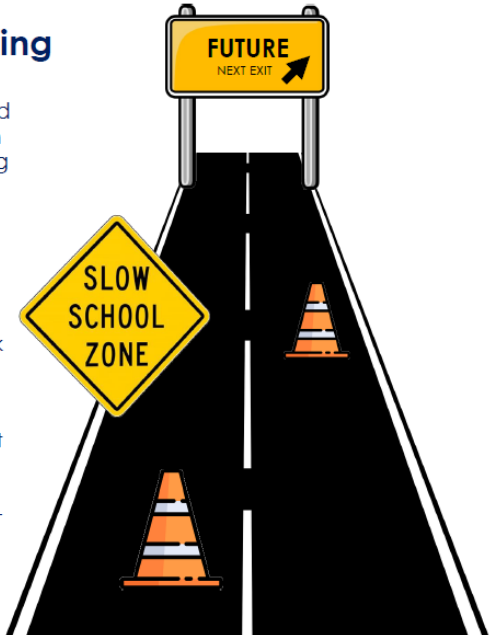
In Washington, indoor mask requirements will be lifted as of 11:59 p.m. on March 11. This new date does not change any other aspect of the updated mask requirements Inslee announced last week. Masks will still be required in certain settings including health care, corrections facilities and long-term care facilities. The Washington State Department of Health will be issuing new guidance for K-12 schools next week so schools can prepare to implement updated safety protocols.

At 1 p.m., Dr. Mark Ghaly, Secretary of the California Health & Human Services Agency, shared the attached slides during a press conference to announce the latest updates to the guidance. The two slides most relevant to the issue of masking in the K-12 school setting are reproduced below.

Future of school masking

We committed to coming back on February 28 to reassess the data and the conditions and determine when the statewide indoor school masking requirements can be changed.

- Safe in-person instruction is essential, particularly for vulnerable populations
- We must ensure that there is low risk of catching COVID-19 in school for students and staff
- We must remain prepared to adjust with conditions of the virus
- We will continue to provide COVID-19 mitigation resources to schools including testing



<u>PROPOSED</u> masking guidance in California					
		REQUIRED	STRONGLY RECOMMENDED	RECOMMENDED	OPTIONAL
Vaccinated & Unvaccinated	Public Indoor (Effective end of day February 28)		✓		
	Schools & Childcare (Effective end of day March 11)		✓		
	Health Care	✓			
	Long-Term Care	✓			
	Jails & Prisons	✓			
NOTE: Locals may have additional requirements beyond the state requirements based on local conditions including community vaccine rates or vaccination rates in schools and childcare facilities.					

The following statement regarding the Governor's announcement was released by E. Toby Boyd, President of the California Teachers Association:

We share the optimism of Gov. Gavin Newsom and CDPH officials that declining COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations allow us to see light at the end of the pandemic tunnel. Reaction to today's announcement will be mixed. Simply put, while some students are ready to immediately remove their masks, others remain very afraid. We urge local school districts to continue to work with educators and families and to act cautiously while prioritizing the safety of students, educators, and their families.

"From day one, safety has been and continues to be the priority for California educators who have spent the last two years confronting COVID's ever-evolving challenges as individuals, as parents, and as teachers and school professionals. They have put their hearts and souls into meeting the academic and social emotional needs of their students while also caring for their own families.

"CTA supports local decisions that include the voice and expertise of local educators and families in determining the safety of school communities. Multi-layered mitigation strategies including vaccines, strong testing programs, good school ventilation systems and masks have been key to ensuring the stability of in-person teaching and learning. We continue to encourage all students and adults who are eligible to get vaccinated and booster shots as needed.

"Change is never easy, and today's announcement is bound to disrupt and destabilize some school communities. As we transition to the next phase of living with COVID-19, we must go forward with respect, understanding, and care for each other."

– E. Toby Boyd

Lastly, it is anticipated that Cal-OSHA guidance will be aligned to reflect the updates shared today by the Administration. Information regarding those changes will be shared as it becomes available, as well as any other important news regarding statewide public health guidance impacting K-12 schools.

JAV:cl