

Association of Bay Area Health Officials

MEMBERS:

Alameda County:

Colleen Chawla, Health Care Services Agency Director
Nicholas Moss, MD, MPH, Health Officer

City of Berkeley:

Lisa Warhuus, PhD, Director, Health, Housing, and Community Services
Lisa B. Hernandez, MD, MPH, Health Officer

Contra Costa County:

Chris Farnitano, MD, Health Officer
Daniel Peddycord, RN, MPA, Public Health Director

Marin County:

Benita McLarin, Director of Health and Human Services
Matthew Willis, MD, MPH, Public Health Officer

Monterey County:

Elsa Jimenez, MPH, Director of Health Services
Edward L. Moreno, MD, MPH, Health Officer

Napa County:

Jennifer Yasumoto, Health and Human Services Director
Karen Relucio, MD, Health Officer

San Benito County:

Tracey Belton, Interim Director of Health & Human Services
David Ghilarducci, MD, FACEP, Interim Health Officer

City & County of San Francisco:

Grant Colfax, MD, Director of Health
Susan Philip, MD, MPH Health Officer

San Mateo County:

Louise Rogers, Health System Chief
Scott Morrow, MD, MPH, Health Officer

Santa Clara County:

Sara Cody, MD, Director and Health Officer
George Han, MD, MPH, Deputy Health Officer

Santa Cruz County:

Mimi Hall, MPH, Health Director
Gail Newel, MD, MPH, FACOG, Health Officer

Solano County:

Gerald Huber, Health & Social Services Director
Bela Matyas, MD, MPH Health Officer

Sonoma County:

Barbie Robinson, Dept. of Health Services Director
Sundari R. Mase, MD, MPH, Health Officer

Bay Area Health Officers Reaffirm Support for Full In-Person School FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 26, 2021

As Bay Area Health Officials, we are excited that more than a million Kindergarten-12th grade students are returning to school for in-person learning this fall across the wider San Francisco Bay Area. In the counties of Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Monterey, Napa, San Benito, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Solano, Sonoma, and the City of Berkeley, many children are back in the classroom for the first time since early 2020.

This summer's surge in COVID-19 cases and hospitalization due to the spread of the Delta variant is causing people to feel cautious about the return to school. We know that when rates of COVID are high in our communities, cases will appear at schools, just as they do in other settings. However, with effective protocols in place – including universal indoor masking, vaccinations of eligible persons, testing, good hand hygiene, staying home when sick and proper ventilation – the data shows that these multiple layers of defense can stop the spread of COVID in school settings.

In considering the many benefits to children, Bay Area Health Officials reaffirm the [joint Bay Area Health Officials' statement from June](#), endorse the recent [statement from Bay Area County Superintendents of Schools](#), and continue to firmly support a safe return to the classroom.

The lack of in-person learning during the COVID-19 pandemic not only disrupted education, but it also weakened social supports and harmed the mental health of students. The risks and benefits of returning to in-person learning are clearer now than any other time during this pandemic – we must all continue to do everything possible to keep kids safely attending their schools.

While children can get COVID-19, severe disease among kids is uncommon and deaths are exceedingly rare. Transmission can happen in any setting, including in schools, but children are often exposed to COVID-19 at home or in social settings where safety practices vary. Cases identified by school testing programs may often be unrelated classroom exposure.

In San Francisco, we are seeing cases of COVID-19 among children however the percentage of pediatric cases has been consistent over time including this most recent surge. For the previous school year (2020-2021), there were seven cases of COVID transmission in all schools in San

Francisco with in-person learning among 48,000 students and teachers, including the San Francisco Unified School District. All other cases reported at schools were related to community transmission outside of school. This was even during the height of our winter surge. Moreover, there have been no verified outbreaks in San Francisco camps and learning hubs this summer.

San Francisco has one of the highest vaccination rates in the nation with 79% of our eligible population fully vaccinated. Impressively, 99% of our 12 to 17-year-olds have received at least one dose of the vaccine. Middle and high schools will be safer because of the high vaccination rates among teens in San Francisco.

The [State's K-12 Schools Guidance for the 2021-22 School Year](#) is practical guidance that emphasizes universal application of the most important safety measures while also offering flexibility for different approaches to meet the needs and capacities of a broad range of schools and districts seeking to safely keep children in classrooms.

School leaders have worked hard to implement this Guidance and are ready to welcome students back. Health Officials continue to monitor the data closely and we will work across the region and the state to adapt when needed.

###

CONTACT FOR SAN FRANCISCO COUNTY:

Alison Hawkes, Director of Communications
San Francisco Department of Public Health
DPH.Press@sfdph.org