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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
PUBLIC HEALTH BRANCH

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**GUIDANCE OF THE DEL NORTE COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICER FOR THE WEARING
OF FACE COVERINGS IN WORKPLACES AND PUBLIC SETTINGS**

DATE OF GUIDANCE: 2/16/2022

SUMMARY OF THIS GUIDANCE

This guidance amends the Order from November 22nd, 2021 requiring all individuals to wear face coverings when indoors in workplaces and public settings, with limited exemptions, and replaces it with a strong recommendation that businesses and events require facial coverings and make such coverings available to individuals entering these spaces. Facial coverings are no longer required in public. Facial coverings are no longer required by youth sports teams and officials and staff engaged in youth sports programs and testing is optional.

BACKGROUND

Since the arrival in the US of the Omicron variant of the SARS-COV-2 virus, Del Norte County has experienced significantly increased transmission levels. This more transmissible variant has now become the predominant strain in the US and this is likely so in Del Norte County. Recent statewide data demonstrates over 90% of tested samples in California are Omicron variant. Fortunately this recent surge in cases has not translated into high rates of severe disease and hospitalization. The COVID-19 vaccines currently authorized in the US have continued to be highly safe and effective at providing protection to individuals and communities, particularly against severe COVID-19 disease.

In considering options to stem COVID-19 transmission, a continued increase in the proportion of the population vaccinated is necessary but not sufficient. Universal use of face coverings in all public settings, including all indoor as well as crowded outdoor settings and events, was an appropriate intervention during this summer's surge in cases and the least disruptive and most immediately effective additional measure that could have been undertaken.

Since that time, the number of new cases and the testing positivity rate have increased, but without attendant hospitalizations and death. Therefore, the health officer is amending the previous order and will continue to assess the public health situation as it evolves.

GUIDANCE

1. Except as otherwise set forth herein, the July 28, 2021 [Guidance for the Use of Face Coverings](#) issued by the California Department of Public Health (“CDPH”), as may be amended from time to time, continues to apply throughout the County.
2. Face Coverings. A “Face Covering” means a face covering that is well-fitted to an individual and covers the ***nose and mouth*** especially while talking, consistent with the Face Covering Requirements. [CDPH guidance “Get the Most out of Masking”](#) addresses current recommendations for a Well-Fitted Masks and Face Covering. A non-vented N95 mask is strongly recommended even if not fit-tested, to provide maximum protection. A Well-Fitted Mask does not include a scarf, ski mask, balaclava, bandana, turtleneck, collar, or single layer of fabric or any mask that has an unfiltered one-way exhaust valve.
3. This guidance ***strongly recommends*** that face coverings shall be worn, regardless of vaccination status, over the mouth and nose, in all indoor public settings, venues, gatherings, and workplaces, such as, but not limited to: offices, retail stores, restaurants and bars, theaters, family entertainment centers, conference centers, and State and local government offices. For purposes of this guidance all non-residential settings are considered public and common areas within apartments and other multi-household residential settings (e.g., common patios, laundry rooms, lobbies) are also considered public. In light of the lack of morbidity and mortality associated with this current Omicron surge, the facial coverings order is rescinded.
4. Individuals, businesses, venue operators, hosts, and others responsible for the operation of indoor public settings and outdoor crowded settings and events are ***strongly recommended*** to continue to:
 - Require all patrons to wear face coverings for all indoor settings and outdoor crowded settings and events, regardless of their vaccination status; and
 - Post clearly visible and easy-to-read signage at all entry points for indoor settings and outdoor crowded settings and events to communicate the masking requirements to all patrons.
 - In addition, those responsible for indoor settings and outdoor crowded public settings and events are strongly encouraged to provide face coverings at no cost to individuals required to wear them.
5. Employers and businesses subject to the Cal/OSHA COVID-19 Emergency Temporary Standards (“ETS”) and/or the Cal/OSHA Aerosol Transmissible Diseases Standards should consult the applicable regulations for additional requirements. The ETS allow local health jurisdictions to mandate more protective measures.
6. Unvaccinated as well as fully vaccinated persons should continue to follow CDC guidance for [unvaccinated people](#) and for [fully vaccinated people](#) to protect themselves and others, including wearing a well-fitted [face covering](#), [physical distancing](#) (at least 6 feet), avoiding crowds, avoiding poorly ventilated spaces, covering coughs and sneezes, [washing hands](#) often, and following any applicable workplace, school, or business sector guidance or requirements including the Cal/OSHA Emergency Temporary Standards. Fully vaccinated people should still watch for [symptoms](#) of COVID-19, especially following an exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19. If symptoms develop, all people – regardless of vaccination status – should isolate and be clinically

evaluated for COVID-19, including SARS-CoV-2 testing. Anyone testing positive for SARS-CoV-2, regardless of vaccination status, must follow applicable Del Norte County Public Health isolation orders.

7. This guidance shall become effective at 12:01 am on February 16, 2022 and will continue to be in effect until it is extended, rescinded, superseded, or amended in writing by the Health Officer. The Health Officer intends to continually review the need for facial coverings orders and may reinstate further facial covering requirements.

8. Additional *recommendations* for school sports, which remain a high risk activity for COVID-19 transmission: DNPH recommends a more frequent testing strategy including a rapid antigen test the day before game play, and a PCR test done weekly on Fridays so that results are generally in the beginning of the week to reduce potential in-class exposure by student athletes. COVID-19 vaccination is strongly recommended for all participants who are eligible for vaccination, as well as coaches, staff and volunteers. Districts, schools, leagues, clubs, teams, organizations and tournaments/events are free to require that all participants and personnel be fully vaccinated for COVID-19 and/or wear facial coverings. DNPH recommends health screening of players, coaches, staff and spectators prior to or upon arriving at the event to identify those with symptoms.

9. All State orders and guidance documents referenced in State orders are complementary to this guidance. By way of this guidance, the Health Officer adopts such directives as orders as well. Where a conflict exists between a local order and any State public health order related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the most restrictive provision controls pursuant to, and consistent with, California Health and Safety Code section 131080, unless the State Health Officer issues an order that expressly determines a provision of a local public health order is a menace to public health.

10. Copies of this guidance shall promptly be: (1) posted on the County website and (2) provided to any member of the public requesting a copy of this guidance.



Aaron Stutz MD FAAEM
Health Officer of the County of Del Norte

Date: 2/16/2022