Health Department

May 16, 2022

Dear Multnomah County school families and staff,

COVID-19 cases, emergency department and urgent care diagnoses, hospitalizations and outbreaks are all increasing in Multnomah County. The current increase in COVID-19 cases is expected to peak in mid-June near the end of the school year. Based on these covid indicators Public Health strongly urges everyone to wear masks indoors until cases and hospitalizations recede again.

While most students may not be at high risk for severe COVID, we are seeing rising cases and outbreaks in schools and among school-aged children and teens. A significant increase in cases could affect year-end events, staffing, and student attendance. In order to protect in-person instruction, and ensure students have the opportunity to attend year-end events, *we are asking schools to encourage students and staff to put their masks back on in indoor spaces for the next few weeks.*

This is not a mandate. The recommendation for voluntary indoor masking is the latest example of how we will live with COVID. The role of Public Health is to alert the public to changes in COVID activity so people can take steps to avoid getting sick, but we have emphasized that any new mandates will be reserved for more serious changes in the virus.

We strongly recommend that everyone:

- Stay up to date on vaccinations
- Wear a mask indoors or in crowds
- Stay home when you're sick
- Wash hands frequently
- Get tested if you have COVID-19 symptoms

Additionally, anyone who knows they've had a recent exposure to someone with COVID-19 should make sure to wear a well-fitting mask around others for 10 days after the exposure and do a COVID test on day 5 if possible.

Please let us know if you have any questions and thank you for your continued efforts during these difficult times.

Jennifer Vines MD, MPH
Multnomah County Health Officer