NHPS Health & Safety
Mask Mandate Considerations

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Director of Health
New Haven Health Department
Overview

• Situational Awareness
• Variants of Concern (BA2)
• CT DPH Newly Issued School Guidance
• Newly Released Data
• NHHD Recommendations
Covid-19 Situational Awareness
COVID-19 in our Community

CDC Metrics

COVID-19 Community Levels in US by County

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0.59%</td>
<td>0.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>3.82%</td>
<td>-0.72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>3082</td>
<td>95.6%</td>
<td>0.66%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How are COVID-19 Community Levels calculated?

In New Haven County, Connecticut, community level is Low.
- Stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccines
- Get tested if you have symptoms

People may choose to mask at any time. People with symptoms, a positive test, or exposure to someone with COVID-19 should wear a mask.
Covid-19 in New Haven, CT

Data Source: CT DPH

- **7-DAY CASE RATE:** 31.4 cases / 100,000  
  Increase: 132%

- **TEST POSITIVITY:** 3.1%

- **HOSPITALIZATIONS:** 23  
  Increase: 100%

Data Updated: 4.07.22

CT DPH Metrics

Average Daily Rate of COVID-19 Cases Among Persons Living in Community Settings per 100,000 Population By Town

Legend:
- 0 cases per 100,000
- 1-5 cases per 100,000
- 6-10 cases per 100,000
- 11 or more cases per 100,000

This map shows the average daily rate of new cases of COVID-19 by town during the past two weeks. Only cases among persons living in community settings are included in this map. The map does not include cases among people who reside in nursing homes, assisted living, or congregate facilities.

Map: µ/16.2020 | Source: CT Department of Public Health | Embedded Download Image: Created with Datawrapper
Variant of Concern: BA. 2

*Data Updated: 4/06/22*

- Surveillance and monitoring efforts of other variants & their severity continue
- Newest variant being monitored: **BA. 2**
- BA.2 is:
  - Highly contagious (*more contagious than the original version of omicron, BA.1*)
  - Spreading in the U.S.
  - Responsible for about 72% of new infections nationwide
  - Can re-infect individuals who've previously had omicron

- **CT**: As of March 20202, nearly 80% of Covid-19 cases in Southern CT are BA.2 cases

Data Sources: CDC, Covid Tracker CT
COVID-19 in NHPS 2021-2022

Covid-19 Cases Students: 1,900
(1 in 12 students have tested positive)

Covid-19 Cases Staff: 462

Total 2021-2022 NHPS Cases: 2,362

Please Note: Ages 5-19 accounted for nearly 20% of all new cases during the Omicron wave.

Data Source: CT DPH
VACCINATION RATES BY AGE GROUP

Data Updated: 4/06/22

Ages 5-11
- First Dose: 34.27%
- Second Dose: 27.57%

Ages 12-17
- First Dose: 65.14%
- Second Dose: 56.92%

Total Rate Ages 5-17
- First Dose: 49% (11,055 individuals)
- Second Dose: 42.2% (9,338 individuals)
### VACCINATION RATES BY AGE GROUP BY TOWN

*Data Updated: 4/06/22*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>New Haven</th>
<th>Hamden</th>
<th>North Haven</th>
<th>West Haven</th>
<th>Woodbridge</th>
<th>East Haven</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ages 5-11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• First Dose</td>
<td>34.27%</td>
<td>45.88%</td>
<td>51.47%</td>
<td>34.32%</td>
<td>68.28%</td>
<td>30.86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Second Dose</td>
<td>27.57%</td>
<td>41.57%</td>
<td>47.92%</td>
<td>29.22%</td>
<td>64.16%</td>
<td>26.96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages 12-17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• First Dose</td>
<td>65.12%</td>
<td>60.78%</td>
<td>77.4%</td>
<td>60.64%</td>
<td>96.64%</td>
<td>67.27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Second Dose</td>
<td>56.92%</td>
<td>56.82%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>55.86%</td>
<td>91.85%</td>
<td>61.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Rate Ages 5-17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• First Dose</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>47.5%</td>
<td>82.5%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Second Dose</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>60.9%</td>
<td>42.5%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# HIGH RISK STUDENTS IN NHPS DISTRICT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Underlying Medical Conditions Associated with Higher Risk for Severe COVID-19</th>
<th>Medical Condition</th>
<th># in District</th>
<th>% (Total: 12,198)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mixed evidence</td>
<td>Asthma</td>
<td>3762</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Risk</td>
<td>Diabetes, Type I, II</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Risk</td>
<td>Other (cancer, cystic fibrosis, heart, obesity)</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Life-Threatening Food Allergy*</td>
<td>931</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>4890</td>
<td>40.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*We include Life-Threatening Food Allergy as children with this type of allergy may be less likely to get vaccinated.
New Haven Race/Ethnicity Breakdown

- Over 60 percent are people of color.
- People of color have disproportionately accounted for COVID cases, hospitalizations, and deaths.
Assessing Community Risk: New CDC Metrics
### New Metric: Community Levels by County

**What Prevention Steps Should You Take Based on Your COVID-19 Community Level?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stay <strong>up to date</strong> with COVID-19 vaccines</td>
<td>If you are <strong>at high risk for severe illness</strong>, talk to your healthcare provider about whether you need to wear a mask and take other precautions&lt;br&gt;Stay <strong>up to date</strong> with COVID-19 vaccines&lt;br&gt;<strong>Get tested</strong> if you have symptoms</td>
<td>Wear a <strong>mask</strong> indoors in public&lt;br&gt;Stay <strong>up to date</strong> with COVID-19 vaccines&lt;br&gt;<strong>Get tested</strong> if you have symptoms&lt;br&gt;Additional precautions may be needed for people <strong>at high risk for severe illness</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

People may choose to mask at any time. People with symptoms, a positive test, or exposure to someone with COVID-19 should wear a mask.

If you are immunocompromised, learn more about [how to protect yourself](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/covid-by-county.html).
Community Levels by County

CDC updated metrics

U.S. COVID–19 Community Levels by County
Data provided by CDC
Updated: Feb. 24, 2022

Legend
- High
- Medium
- Low
- N/A

Considerations: Newly Issued CT DPH Guidance

*Effective February 18th, 2022*
Newly Issued CT DPH Guidelines: Routine Strategies

• **COVID-19 vaccination** for all eligible students and staff, including booster
• **Following isolation guidelines** for students/staff who have symptoms or have tested positive for, COVID-19.
• Following quarantine guidance for students/staff who have been notified of higher-risk close contact exposures (e.g., household, crowded social gatherings).
• **Recommending prevention strategies**, including testing (self-testing and/or at provider sites) following illness or exposures to COVID-19 cases.
• Continuing to advise parents to report all cases to the school and schools reporting to their local health department and CTDPH.
• Being prepared to respond quickly to rapid increases in cases or clusters of cases in schools (including increases in absenteeism due to respiratory illness)
Newly Issued CT DPH Guidelines: Outbreak Strategies

- **Universal masking policy** for students and staff
- **Cohorting** during meals, recess, and other gathering times to limit spread
- Limiting outside visitors to the school
- **Notifying potentially exposed students and staff and recommend testing**
- **Offer testing**
  - State supported programs (e.g., Project COVID DeteCT)
  - Distribution of purchased self-test kits.
  - **Testing of a group of students and/or staff associated with an outbreak should occur as soon as possible after the suspected outbreak is detected.**

Enhanced mitigation strategies in response to worsening COVID-19 transmission conditions: Spacing, Ventilation, Cleaning, and Communication
Considerations: Newly Released Data
Mandatory masking in schools reduced COVID-19 cases during Delta surge

NEW NIH STUDY
• NIH-funded study compared more than 1.1 million students across nine states.
• Schools with mandatory masking during the Delta surge had approximately 72% fewer cases of in-school transmission of SARS-CoV-2 when compared to schools with optional or partial masking policies
Mask Optional Policies Lead to Outbreaks

Concord, Massachusetts
• Following Mask Optional Policy, 44 reported Covid-19 cases in Grade 6 and additional absences in Concord Middle School
• Lead to school closure

Greenwich, Connecticut
• Reported 40 cases across 11 schools two weeks after Mask Optional Policy
NEW CDC MMWR

- Districts with universal mask requirements had a 23% lower incidence of COVID-19 among staff members and students compared with districts without mask requirements
- Masks remain an important part of a multicomponent approach to prevent COVID-19 in K–12 settings

FIGURE 2. Student and staff member and community SARS-CoV-2 infection rates before and after* implementation of school mask requirement — 26 school districts, Arkansas, August–October 2021

MASKS IMPLEMENTED
Pediatric Hospitalizations in the U.S.

- School plans must be centered on protecting the whole community, including those placed at highest risk.
- Pediatric hospitalizations were at the highest point of the entire pandemic in mid-January 2022 and remain high.
- Throughout the pandemic, hospitalizations and deaths have been highest in low-income, Indigenous, Black, and Latinx communities.

COVID-19 is far more serious for children than the flu

*Concern:* Some have advocated for the removal of masks and other protections for students, claiming COVID-19 is no more dangerous than the flu. But these claims are not supported by the evidence.

- Over the pandemic, more than 1,200 children have died from COVID-19 in the US.
- Over the same time frame, fewer than 10 flu-related childhood deaths have been reported.*
  - Before the pandemic, fewer than 200 children died from the flu each year.
  - *5 flu deaths have been reported so far in 2021-22

Fact: **Children can develop Long COVID.**

**Concern:** Some claim that COVID-19 is not a serious concern for children and dismiss the reality of children developing Long COVID.

- A growing body of research shows many adults **and** children develop Long COVID.
- Long COVID sufferers experience a wide range of long-term symptoms and conditions after a COVID-19 infection, often after mild or fully asymptomatic infections.
- Studies have shown multiple organs can be affected, including brain, kidneys, lungs, and the heart.

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**The New York Times**

‘**This Is Really Scary**: Kids Struggle With Long Covid’

Lingering physical, mental and neurological symptoms are affecting children as well as adults, including many who had mild reactions to the initial coronavirus infection.

Sources:
- https://www.longcovidkids.org/long-covid-research-on-children/
- https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-022-03334-w
- https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5837618/
Effects of Long COVID

Fact: **Long COVID can have serious effects on children’s health & learning.**

- Symptoms and disability can impact children’s everyday life, often making it difficult to attend school or participate in extracurricular activities.
- Long COVID is recognized federally (Section 504 and IDEA), with guidance on how schools should support students with Long COVID.
- Preventing Long COVID by reducing COVID infections is important for students’ learning and current and long-term health.
- Children are not the only ones at risk in schools. Teachers and school staff can also develop Long COVID.

Source:
- https://www.longcovidkids.org/long-covid-research-on-children/
- https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7927578/
- https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2021/10/03/long-haul-covid-kids-schools/
Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children

Fact: Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome (MIS-C) is a Serious Consequence of COVID-19 for Many Children

- MIS-C is a rare but serious condition that appears in some school-aged children 2 to 6 weeks after a COVID-19 infection.

- A total of 6,851 MIS-C cases and 59 MIS-C Deaths (meeting case definition) have been reported as of January 31, 2022

No evidence that masks lead to learning loss

Fact: **Masks do not lead to learning loss in students.**

*Concern:* There have been unsubstantiated claims that masks make it more difficult for students to learn or read emotions. There is no evidence to support these claims.

- There is no empirical evidence showing that masks interfere with student learning and social-emotional development.
- Based on a review of available literature, The South Carolina Department of Health concluded “No data regarding the impact of mask wearing on children’s academic development or performance was identified during a thorough scientific literature review.”
- Experts agree, including the AAP, who notes, “Masks will not affect your child’s ability to focus or learn in school.” Schools should support any students who are struggling with learning during this pandemic.

“Kids are able to determine the emotion that someone is likely to feel even when they’re wearing a face mask.”

- Dr. Ashley Ruba, Developmental Psychologist

Source: [https://scdhec.gov/sites/default/files/media/document/Science-on-Mask-Use-in-K-12-Schools_6.20.21_FINAL.pdf](https://scdhec.gov/sites/default/files/media/document/Science-on-Mask-Use-in-K-12-Schools_6.20.21_FINAL.pdf); [https://newrepublic.com/article/195306/face-masks-dont-harm-kids-development](https://newrepublic.com/article/195306/face-masks-dont-harm-kids-development); [https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7008e4.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7008e4.htm); [https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/Mask-Mythbusters.aspx](https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/Mask-Mythbusters.aspx)
NHHD Recommendations
NHHD Recommendations

- Test
- Treat
- Vaccinate
- Mask
This is a weekly screening program offered free of charge by CT DPH. Identifying cases proactively is another important mitigation measure. Enrollment is extremely low.
Promote

- Vaccination
  - School clinics

- Project COVID DeteCT – free weekly screening program
  - Expanded to include teachers and staff in addition to all students
  - Electronic informed consent for parents
NHHD Recommendations

• Recommend continuing with mask mandate due to:
  • Our population is at increased risk for contracting COVID
    • More than 60% are people of color
    • 40% of students in the district are high risk
  • **Low vaccination rates for ages 5-17**
    • Screening Program – Project COVID DeteCT has low enrollment
    • COVID case may be mild but there is still risk of contracting Long COVID or MIS-C
    • No evidence showing that masks lead to learning loss
    • Masks have been shown to be effective should there be another surge

• **Reassess after April Spring Break**