



## NEWS RELEASE

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### Illinois Department of Public Health Adopts CDC COVID-19 Prevention School Guidance

*Guidance emphasizes the COVID-19 prevention strategies most important for in-person learning*

**SPRINGFIELD** – The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) is fully adopting the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) updated guidance for [COVID-19 Prevention in Kindergarten \(K\)-12 Schools](#) released today.

“Our goal is to protect the health of students, teachers, and staff so that in-person learning can resume as safely as possible,” said IDPH Director Dr. Ngozi Ezike. “The CDC is right: vaccination is the best preventive strategy. As school board members, parents, teachers and superintendents plan for a return to in-person learning in the fall, we strongly encourage those who are not vaccinated to continue to mask. IDPH is proud to fully adopt school guidance issued by CDC, which is based on the latest scientific information about COVID-19.”

The updated school guidance now aligns with guidance for [fully vaccinated people](#), which allows activities to resume for fully vaccinated people without wearing a mask except where required by federal, state, and local rules and regulations.

Major elements of the updated guidance include:

- Masks should be worn indoors by all individuals (age 2 and older) who are not fully vaccinated.
- CDC recommends schools maintain at least 3 feet of physical distance between students within classrooms, combined with indoor mask wearing by people who are not fully vaccinated, to reduce transmission risk. When it is not possible to maintain a physical distance of at least 3 feet, such as when schools cannot fully re-open while maintaining these distances, it is especially important to layer multiple other prevention strategies, such as indoor masking.
- Screening testing, ventilation, handwashing and respiratory etiquette, staying home when sick and getting tested, contact tracing in combination with quarantine and isolation, and cleaning and disinfection are also important layers of prevention to keep schools safe.
- Many schools serve children under the age of 12 who are not eligible for vaccination at this time. Therefore, this guidance emphasizes implementing layered prevention strategies (masking, distancing, testing) to protect people who are not fully vaccinated.

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Schools and communities should monitor community transmission of COVID-19, vaccination coverage, screening testing, and outbreaks to guide decisions about the level of layered prevention strategies being implemented.

State Superintendent of Education Dr. Carmen I. Ayala issued the following declaration mandating in-person learning with limited exceptions:

Beginning with the 2021-22 school year, all schools must resume fully in-person learning for all student attendance days, provided that, pursuant to [105 ILCS 5/10-30](#) and [105 ILCS 5/34-18.66](#), remote instruction be made available for students who have not received a COVID-19 vaccine or who are not eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine, only while they are under quarantine consistent with guidance or requirements from a local public health department or the Illinois Department of Public Health.

“All our students deserve to return safely in-person to schools this fall,” said Dr. Ayala. “With vaccination rates continually rising and unprecedented federal funding to support safe in-person learning, and mitigations such as contact tracing and increased ventilation in place in schools, we are fully confident in the safety of in-person learning this fall. We look forward to a great school year and to the energy of Illinois’ young minds once again filling our school buildings.”

The updated school guidance can be found at <http://www.dph.illinois.gov/covid19/community-guidance/school-guidance>. This guidance is subject to change pursuant to changing public health conditions and updates from CDC.

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