

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

The RSA Tower, 201 Monroe Street, P.O. Box 303017, Montgomery, AL 36130-3017
(334) 206-5300 • FAX (334) 206-5520 Web Site: alabamapublichealth.gov

NEWS RELEASE

ADPH urges the continuation of universal masking in schools and other preventive measures to help reduce cases of COVID-19 in schools

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Karen Landers, M.D.
Wes Stubblefield, M.D.

Consistent and correct mask use in schools has helped reduce the number of cases of COVID-19, helped schools remain open to in-person learning in Alabama, and helped prevent the consequences of this serious disease.

Even with the decline in COVID-19 cases in Alabama, almost 23 percent of cases are in the 0-17 age group and, of that number, almost 18 percent of cases are in school-age children. As of September 27, at least 30 children were hospitalized in Alabama for COVID-19 and three were on ventilators.

Medical Officers and Pediatricians, Drs. Karen Landers and Wes Stubblefield of the Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH), strongly advise all schools to apply all preventive measures to reduce COVID-19, including universal masking for students, teachers, staff and visitors; good hand hygiene; social distancing; environmental cleaning and good ventilation to reduce disease transmission.

Dr. Stubblefield, former President of the Alabama Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, who recently joined ADPH, stated, "Practicing preventive measures against COVID-19 in schools is critical to keeping our kids in the classroom where they can learn in a safe environment."

Mask use in schools is a critical strategy for preventing the transmission of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported in studies published recently in the CDC Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR). These studies can be viewed as follows:

<https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/pdfs/mm7039e1-H.pdf>

<https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/pdfs/mm7039e3-H.pdf>

Studies in the MMWR reports found that school districts without universal masking policies in place were more likely to have COVID-19 outbreaks than other districts that did not implement mask policies. A conclusion stated, "Given the high transmissibility of the SARS-CoV-2 B.1.617.2 (Delta) variant, universal masking, in addition to vaccination of all eligible students, staff members and faculty and implementation of other prevention measures remains essential to COVID-19 prevention in K-12 settings."

Dr. Landers added, "I very much support keeping kids in classroom settings, and data reinforce the advisability of universal indoor masking in schools, along with other layered mitigation measures."

The Alabama K-12 COVID-19 School Dashboard can be viewed at

<https://alpublichealth.maps.arcgis.com/apps/dashboards/c6909b3820ae4047b0317fa00abc46fc>.

ADPH guidance for schools was updated September 24. The new guidance includes case study examples to help schools and parents navigate specific incidents in responding to COVID-19.