

July 22, 2021

Dear Nebraska School Communities,

Across the country, the COVID-19 pandemic has had devastating effects. Although we have stayed connected and endured these challenges together, COVID-19 has greatly disrupted the usual way of teaching for staff and learning for students across the state. It has forced everyone to adapt in ways we probably never anticipated.

Throughout the last year, numerous measures have been implemented to ensure the health and safety of Nebraska students and to continue academic progress. Schools have masked up, transitioned to virtual learning, and paused many school activities; measures which have successfully limited the spread of illness in our communities. Educators and school staff have persevered through all these challenges, and the medical community is extremely grateful for all your hard work.

We are writing to encourage Nebraska schools to continue to follow recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics to keep our students and staff safe as we continue to see rising cases of COVID in our state.

- All eligible Nebraska school staff and students should be vaccinated against COVID-19. Getting vaccinated offers an added layer of protection against COVID-19 that could also protect your school's staff and students, families, and community. All COVID-19 vaccines available in the United States are safe and effective.
- Universal masking for students older than 2 years and staff is still recommended in school settings, even for those who are vaccinated. Students under 12 years old cannot be vaccinated yet. The COVID-19 Delta variant spreads more quickly than previous variants, and masks provide an extra layer of protection for everyone, especially for our most vulnerable children who have not had the advantage of immunization.
- Students and staff who are directly exposed to COVID-19 should quarantine and isolate according to CDC guidelines.

Stopping this pandemic requires using all the tools we have available: vaccines, masks, and appropriate testing and contact tracing. These are the tools that will allow Nebraska's children to continue to benefit from the in-person education that we know our schools do best. Your health and safety continue to be our priority. There are many retail pharmacy locations and mass vaccination sites across the state. Visit www.vaccines.gov to find a location convenient to you. If you want to know more about COVID-19 vaccines, visit www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/vaccines. The AAP's full return-to-school guidelines are here: <https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/covid-19-planning-considerations-return-to-in-person-education-in-schools/>.

We as Nebraskans have stood together this year, and we need to stand together again to help stop this virus. COVID-19 vaccination is a safe and effective means to help us do that. It takes all of us. Please take care of yourself this summer.

Sincerely,



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