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KANSAS CITY

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**MEDICAL SOCIETY**

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August 2, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of the leadership and members of the Kansas City Medical Society, we urge you to give very serious consideration to policy regarding a masking requirement for the upcoming school year.

Kansas City Medical Society supports guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC)<sup>1</sup> and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)<sup>2</sup> that in-person learning options are preferable to virtual for both the academic and social-developmental merits. However, these benefits will be vastly undermined if COVID-19 outbreaks force school closures and consequent disruption in children's education, because universal masking was not implemented.

The Delta variant is a game changer with unknown long-term effects on our children. It is more than twice as contagious as the original COVID-19 strain and it is now the dominant strain in our community. Despite all of our recent progress in fighting this pandemic, the rapidly rising cases in KC Metro area now show a disappointing regression back to where we were nearly 8 months ago, with daily new cases in the ~200 range.<sup>3</sup> Children's Mercy Hospital is currently at capacity for inpatient beds due to COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses. Adult hospitalizations are also increasing at an alarming rate and more and more ICU beds are being used by COVID-19 patients.<sup>4</sup> Our current vaccination rates are nowhere near our targets, ranging from only 36% to 50%. These numbers are even lower in children aged 17 years or under, and far below the 70-80% needed to achieve herd immunity.<sup>5</sup>

**To keep our children in school while keeping them healthy, we support the American Academy of Pediatrics recommendation of universal masking Pre-K through 12 be required for all students, teachers, staff, and visitors, even for those who are vaccinated.** This is consistent with the updated CDC guidance which was released on July 27<sup>th</sup>.<sup>6</sup> The recommendations include the following:

- Universal masking for everyone as noted above while indoors and when safe distances cannot be maintained.
- The schools should partner with local public health experts to determine when to safely discontinue universal masking.
- Mask exemptions due to underlying medical conditions should be permitted with authorization by a licensed medical practitioner (MD, DO, APRN, PA).
- Mask policies will be enforced according to the school's code of conduct and the necessary disciplinary action shall occur for individuals who do not comply.
- These policies should be reviewed on a routine basis and modified according to the most current data available due the fluid and ever-changing nature of this deadly disease.

We urge the Kansas City Metro area Superintendents, Deputy Superintendents, the Boards of Education, County Commissioners and all community leaders to mandate a universal mask policy for the safety and health of our children and our community as a whole.

Sincerely,



Scott W. Kujath, MD, FSVS, FACS  
President, Kansas City Medical Society

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html>

<sup>2</sup> <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/>

<sup>3</sup> Johnson County COVID-19 Dashboard. Available: <https://viz.jocogov.org/t/Public/views/JohnsonCountyKS-COVID-19Update/Dashboard?%3AisGuestRedirectFromVizportal=y&%3Aembed=y>. Accessed 27 July 2021.

<sup>4</sup> <https://marc2.org/covidhub/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://viz.jocogov.org/t/Public/views/JohnsonCountyKS-COVID-19Update/Dashboard?%3AisGuestRedirectFromVizportal=y&%3Aembed=y>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated-guidance.html>