

STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Deidre S. Gifford, MD, MPH
Acting Commissioner



Ned Lamont
Governor
Susan Bysiewicz
Lt. Governor

June 21, 2021

The Honorable Tony Hwang
Senator, Twenty-Eighth Senate District
300 Capitol Avenue, Suite 3400
Hartford, CT 06106-1591

Dear Senator Hwang:

Thank you for your letter on June 4, 2021 in which you request clarification of the expectations regarding mask wearing for students at daycare, summer camp, preschool and K-12 school. You note the importance of clear guidance to aid parents, families, school district leaders and heads of child-care establishments as we move forward this summer and into the Fall 2021.

Pursuant to Executive Order 12A, the Commissioner of Public Health was charged with issuing a rule setting forth a list of locations where masks and cloth face coverings are required. The Commissioner's rule states that all individuals, regardless of vaccination status, must continue to wear a face-covering mask at all times at various locations including, 1) Inside public or private school buildings (PreK-12); and 2) inside licensed childcare facilities, including youth camps. With the conclusion of the school year, we are encouraging schools, camps and childcare facilities to move as many summer activities as possible out-of-doors in order to reduce the risk of COVID transmission among unvaccinated students and staff.

Since the beginning of this pandemic, staff and leadership of the Department of Public Health, State Department of Education and Office of Early Childhood have worked together to address COVID19 related concerns and have produced guidance documents to address and bring together public health, safety and education needs. The below guidance documents were developed among our staffs in consideration of the latest known science on the spread of COVID19 and the need to have children back to in-person learning as a part of the health, wellbeing, and the benefit of the children of our State.

- *What You Need to Know: COVID-19 Vaccination, Mask-Wearing, and Social Distancing:*
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Departments-and-Agencies/DPH/dph/environmental_health/COVID-19/COVID_Rules_Post-May-19_Updated-052621.pdf
- *Interim Guidance for Summer School and Enrichment Opportunities, CSDE:*
<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Digest/2020-21/SummerSchoolEnrichmentOpps.pdf>



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- Connecticut Office of Early Childhood Guidance: <https://www.ctoec.org/covid-19/memos/>
- *Guidance on Operating Youth Camps*, CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/summer-camps.html>

CDC also advises that “in areas of substantial to high transmission, camps may consider requiring mask use indoors by all people present including vaccinated campers, staff, and other people such as visitors.” Very recently, all Connecticut counties moved into the “moderate” transmission category, and DPH and OEC are currently considering revisions to youth camp guidance that would reflect our state’s lower current community risk status and the possibility that some camps with older children only may have fully vaccinated campers and staffs.

Vaccinated and unvaccinated adults and children alike can now enjoy summer activities outdoors with their families and friends without masks. Guidance for the Fall School year is currently under development by our team including State DPH infectious disease and environmental health epidemiologists, and state education and childcare staff and leadership. We are mindful of the mitigation strategies and science that have been deployed since March 2020, CDC’s current science, information from the Federal Department of Education, and the information/decisions shared by our colleagues in other states. Vaccination rates and disease transmission are critically important to the decisions that must be made for Fall in-person learning. We intend to provide clear direction for the Fall informed by pending guidance from the CDC.

We welcome the superintendents within your jurisdiction and their staffs to join the CSDE/DPH COVID19 Health & Safety Superintendents’ Meeting held on Tuesday mornings. These calls offer an opportunity to speak directly with leadership representatives from CSDE and DPH to ask questions regarding current COVID-19 science, vaccination rates, school protocols, etc. directly with state experts.

Thank you for your continued dedication to protecting Connecticut’s residents.

Sincerely,

Deidre S. Gifford, MD MPH

cc: Charlene Russell-Tucker, Acting Commissioner, State Department of Education