



September 24, 2021

Dear Parents and Guardians,

The first few weeks back in school are always an exciting time, but even more so this year with students returning to their classrooms for in-person learning after many months of remote learning.

We are approaching this year with extra attention to the safety and health of children. With effective COVID-19 prevention strategies in place—vaccinations, universal indoor masking, testing, hand washing, and proper ventilation—we have multiple layers of defense that can help significantly reduce the spread of COVID-19 in school settings.

We are happy to see students back on school campuses across our county. Like many of you, we are committed to having students learn in person whenever possible, enabling them to benefit from the full range of experiences and supports that a school campus offers. The lack of in-person learning disrupted education, weakened social supports, and affected the mental health of many students. The risk of COVID-19 can be minimized while keeping students in school. The risks associated with in-person learning must be weighed against the many, many benefits of being back on campus.

Our community is highly vaccinated, and we all benefit from that. More than 83% of county residents 12 or older are fully vaccinated, one of the highest vaccination rates in the U.S. At the same time, many people are anxious about the health of children under 12 since they are not yet eligible to be vaccinated. With COVID-19 in the community, and especially with the recent surge of cases due to the highly contagious Delta variant, we have seen and will continue to see some COVID-19 cases in schools. However, the relatively high vaccination rates in the community, plus the many other layers of protection we have in place in schools, will help keep people as healthy as possible in school and elsewhere.

It's also important to remember that cases identified in schools could be the result of an exposure outside of school. Transmission can happen in any setting, including in schools, but also at home or in social settings where people may not consistently wear masks or follow other safety measures prevalent in our schools. The safety measures taken in schools, like regular testing, are just one part of our joint effort to protect our families, teachers and staff, and the broader community this fall and throughout the year.



Santa Clara County
**PUBLIC
HEALTH**


Santa Clara County
Office of Education

There are a number of things you can do to help our students and the community stay healthy this school year.

- Keep your children home if they are sick. Please don't send them to school, even with what you think is a minor illness, until you have had them evaluated and/or tested appropriately.
- Make sure that all eligible members of your household get fully vaccinated against COVID-19 as soon as possible. That means people 12 and older right now, and younger children once the vaccine is approved for them.
- Ensure that your children and you are vaccinated against other diseases, including the flu. Some families have skipped routine doctor's visits during the pandemic and have fallen behind on shots that protect against whooping cough, measles or other serious illnesses. Certain vaccinations are required for children to attend California schools.
- Ensure that your children wear masks that are comfortable for them at school and other indoor settings, a requirement in Bay Area counties.
- Make sure that if anyone in your family has symptoms of COVID-19 or has been exposed to someone who has tested positive, they get tested.
- Schedule a dental appointment for your children if they have not been to the dentist in the past year. This will help to avoid untreated cavities or infections that may impact their success at school.
- Access emotional support if you or someone in your family needs it.

Resources for families:

- COVID-19 vaccinations for ages 12 and older: your family doctor, pharmacy, or sccfreevax.org
- COVID-19 testing: sccfreetest.org
- Required vaccinations for attending school: ShotsForSchool.org
- TB screening: PublicHealthProviders.sccgov.org/schools
- Free VTA transportation services to vaccination clinics: 408-809-2124
- Emotional support: caParentYouthHelpline.org or call or text 855-427-2736

Together, we can keep our children and our community safe and healthy.
We are stronger together.

Sincerely,

Sara H. Cody, M.D.
Health Officer and Director
County of Santa Clara Public Health Department

Mary Ann Dewan, Ph.D.
County Superintendent of Schools
County of Santa Clara Office of Education

