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## **Statement from the New York State Association of County Health Officials on Universal Masking and K-12 Guidance Related to Increasing COVID-19 Transmission Rates Throughout the State**

**By Sarah Ravenhall, Executive Director**

“Counties across the state are experiencing a significant uptick in cases of COVID-19 due to the Delta variant, which has been shown to be significantly more transmissible than earlier variants. In addition, counties to varying degrees are reporting cases among people who have previously been vaccinated against COVID-19.

“The New York State Association of County Health Officials (NYSACHO) therefore strongly recommends support for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendation for **universal masking indoors, regardless of vaccination status**. More information can be found here:

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

“The most critical indoor settings include schools, places of business and restaurants. Masking is still mandated by the federal government in healthcare and public transportation settings.

“The CDC’s updated recommendation stems from the observation that people infected with the Delta variant after vaccination may be contagious and spread the virus to others. **Vaccination is still highly effective in preventing significant illness, hospitalization, and death, and is still recommended for all as the best preventive strategy against COVID-19 disease.**

“Additionally, in light of Commissioner Zucker’s announcement that New York State will not provide school reopening guidance for K-12 schools, and will not provide similar guidance to local health departments, NYSACHO recommends that all public and private schools and school districts review and follow the CDC’s guidance in preparing their school reopening plans. The mitigation strategies included in the guidance, along with robust efforts to promote vaccinations, will support the safe, healthy, reopening of schools for the 2021-22 school year. “

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