



TOP 5 THINGS TO KNOW

ABOUT THE AUGUST 2021 COVID-19 SCHOOLS GUIDANCE

The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) emphasize that **layered prevention strategies** should be in place to prevent COVID transmission in schools this fall. On August 2, the CDPH issued updated [COVID-19 Public Health Guidance](#) and [FAQs](#) for K-12 schools. Here are the **top five things to know**.

1

Vaccination is strongly recommended

Public health officials note that achieving high levels of vaccination among eligible students, as well as teachers, staff, and household members is one of the most critical strategies to help schools safely resume full operations.

- Districts can **promote vaccine access** by hosting school-based clinics in partnership with local providers and can access CDPH support for that by completing [this form](#), emailing MobileVaccineSites@cdph.ca.gov, or contacting your county health department.
- **Educational materials**, including social media and multilingual resources, are available at the [Vaccinate All 58](#) website and in the [youth vaccination partner toolkit](#).
- The CDPH provides detailed guidance for **vaccine verification** to help inform school safety strategies such as testing, contact tracing, and quarantining.

2

Masks are a very important safety layer

- K-12 students are **required** to mask indoors, with limited exemptions per CDPH face mask guidance. Adults in K-12 school settings are **required** to mask when sharing indoor spaces with students. [Cal/OSHA](#) mask standards apply when not with students. Given new evidence about the highly transmissible [Delta variant](#), the [CDC](#) and [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) also recommend universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors to K-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status. Additionally, some counties may require masks.
- Schools must provide a face covering to students who inadvertently fail to bring one and must have a local protocol to enforce the mask requirements.
- CDPH no longer requires minimum physical distancing when other mitigation strategies like masking are implemented.

3

Ventilation and air filtration help reduce virus particles in the air

COVID risk increases in crowded, poorly ventilated indoor spaces due to small aerosols that can remain airborne. Districts should implement [CDPH ventilation and filtration guidance](#), including ensuring adequate outdoor air, implementing physical air filtration methods like MERV-13 and HEPA filters, and avoiding air cleaning devices that generate harmful pollutants (i.e., ionization devices or ozone generators), or devices of unproven effectiveness. These steps are outlined in [this report](#) and will be detailed in updated C4OB sample bargaining language over air quality/ventilation that is coming soon.

4

COVID-19 testing remains important

COVID testing in schools remains a powerful tool for safe in-person learning, including providing regular testing for unvaccinated individuals to prevent outbreaks, responding quickly to outbreaks, testing those with symptoms, and monitoring infection rates. The state offers free resources to schools including software, test kits, shipping, and processing. **Testing strategies for the 2021-22 school year are outlined in [this CDPH resource](#).**

5

Quarantine differs by vaccination status and mask-wearing

State guidelines provide details for updated quarantining procedures, including protocols for vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals, for students wearing masks, and in light of symptoms and response testing. See [items #7-10](#) of the CDPH Schools Guidance and [page 15 of the Cal/OSHA regulations](#) and [FAQs](#) for more details.