

Office of the Director

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LOCAL HEALTH OFFICER *OUTDOOR* and *INDOOR MASKING* ORDERS

Whereas state law, RCW 70.05.070(2) - (3), requires and empowers the Local Health Officer to take such action as is necessary to maintain health and to control and prevent the spread of any contagious or infectious diseases within the jurisdiction, and;

Whereas state regulation, WAC 246-100-036, requires the Local Health Officer, when necessary, to institute disease control measures as he, she, or they deem necessary based on his, her, or their professional judgment, current standards of practice, and the best available medical and scientific information;

Whereas SARS-CoV-2 spreads from person to person primarily through the air carrying very small droplets and aerosol particles that contain infectious virus, and;

Whereas the risk of transmission is greatest within three to six feet of an infectious source, but can also occur more than six feet away; and;

Whereas COVID-19 infections can be spread from persons who are symptom-free and before symptoms appear, and;

Whereas in King County SARS-CoV-2 transmission is increasing largely due the spread of the more contagious Delta variant, the discontinuation of the Heathy Washington Roadmap to Recovery community level CoV-19 restrictions, and a corresponding increase in activities and opportunities for SARS-CoV-2 transmission from person to person, and with higher rates of disease among young to middle aged adults and teens, in south and southeast King County, and in Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic, Black, and Native American/Alaska Native communities, also disproportionately affecting essential workers and multi-generational households;

Whereas the Delta variant of SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes CoV-19 infection is significantly more contagious than previous SARS-CoV-2 viruses and has been associated with a greater risk for hospitalization;

Whereas fully-vaccinated people have a very high level of protection against serious illness due to

CoV-19, but can still potentially transmit the infection to others;

Whereas currently some 67% of King County residents are fully vaccinated against CoV-19, yet approximately 750,000 King County residents remain unvaccinated, including approximately 320,000 King County residents who are eligible for vaccination, approximately 308,000 King County children under 12 years of age who are not currently eligible, and, tens of thousands of persons in King County with underlying immunocompromise, and all of these groups are at increased risk for CoV-19 due to the Delta variant compared with previously circulating SARS-CoV-2 lineages;

Whereas in King County CoV-19 vaccine completion rates vary by age, race, ethnicity, and geography. The completion rate is significantly lower in younger age groups (64% in 12-19 years old, 64% in 20-29 years old; 73% in 30-39 years old populations), and among Black (63%) and Hispanic (64%) community members and in certain neighborhoods, particularly in South King County and Seattle;

Whereas the risk of being exposed is higher for everyone – vaccinated and unvaccinated – and more infections will occur, primarily among unvaccinated people, when CoV-19 spreads at a high rate primarily among the unvaccinated, and;

Whereas face masks reduce the emission of SARS-CoV-2 virus-laden droplets (“source control”) from infected persons and inhalation of airborne virus by a wearer, and community masking is recommended by CDC to reduce the spread of SARS-CoV-2;

Whereas when unvaccinated people gather indoors, especially without wearing masks, they are particularly at risk both of getting CoV-19 themselves as well as spreading it to others. The risk of exposure is especially higher in crowded indoor spaces with multiple unvaccinated people, poor ventilation, and activities that can increase the amount of virus in the air such as singing, shouting and aerobic exercise;

Whereas the CDC recommends that unvaccinated people wear a mask within indoor business and other public settings, and within crowded outdoor settings, and that vaccinated people wear a mask within indoor public settings in areas with substantial or high transmission;

Whereas, given the increased transmissibility of the Delta virus, the risk for spread of COVID-19 is increased at large, crowded, outdoor events where distancing cannot be maintained, where unvaccinated persons are present, and where there is loud talking, shouting, singing, or aerobic exercise, even though the risk for spread of COVID-19 is generally much lower outdoors than indoors; and,

Whereas, the Washington State Department of Health strongly recommends that all people, regardless of vaccination status, wear face coverings in crowded outdoor settings, such as sporting events, fairs, parades, concerts, and similar settings where there is decreased ability to consistently maintain physical distance between non-household members;

Based upon all the above, as the Local Health Officer, I hereby find that:

The use of face masks in certain outdoor situations where people cannot remain at least 6 feet apart from non-household members is reasonable and necessary in King County to reduce the risk for CoV-19 transmission, and;

The continued indoor use of face masks for everyone 5-years of age and older within indoor public spaces is also reasonable and necessary in King County to reduce the risk for CoV-19 transmission.

EFFECTIVE SEPTEMBER 7, 2021, as Local Health Officer I hereby **ORDER** as follows:

OUTDOOR MASKING ORDER

Masks are **required** at any outdoor event with 500 or more people in attendance. This **requirement** applies to all people, both vaccinated and unvaccinated, 5-years of age and older.

Further, in any other outdoor situations where people cannot remain at least 6 feet apart from non-household members, use of face masks is strongly **recommended** for all people, both vaccinated and unvaccinated, 5-years of age and older.

INDOOR MASKING ORDER

Everyone 5-years of age and older in King County **must** wear a face covering within indoor public spaces.

This INDOOR MASKING ORDER applies to all indoor spaces that are open to the public, including gyms, exercise facilities, auditoriums, stadiums, retail, grocery stores, government buildings, and other businesses and places where members of the public can enter freely, and applies to all persons in these facilities, including those practicing or playing recreational sports.

Everyone in correctional facilities, homeless shelters, schools, public transportation, and certain health care settings, including doctor's offices, long-term care, and hospitals **must** also wear a well-fitted mask and adhere to guidance from the Washington State Department of Health.

This INDOOR MASKING ORDER does **not** apply to:

- Indoor, non-public spaces, including businesses, offices, and other places of employment with limited access;
- to individuals while drinking or eating;
- to individuals engaged in gymnastics when there is a possibility of the mask being caught on equipment; and,
- to children under the age of five.

For children ages two to four-years old, although exempt from this ORDER, face coverings are

recommended, and should be worn with the assistance and close supervision of an adult, in accordance with the current Health Order from the Secretary of the Washington Department of Health.

Employers should continue to follow current guidance and requirements from the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries on worker safety.

As the Local Health Officer, I strongly urge all people in King County to comply with these ORDERS and recommendations, and likewise urge all businesses that are open to the public, including grocery and other retail establishments, to implement policies and practices to ensure that their customers and employees wear face masks, to protect the health of their customers and workers.

Signed and ordered this 2nd day of September 2021, in Seattle, Washington, by



Dr. Jeff Duchin
Local Health Officer
Public Health – Seattle & King County