

March 2, 2022

Dear YCOE Employees,

The State of California has provided an update on masking that we wanted to share with staff.

On Monday, February 28, [Governor Gavin Newsom announced](#) that after 11:59 pm on March 11, universal indoor masking will no longer be required in school and childcare facilities but will continue to be **strongly recommended** for all persons, regardless of vaccination status. The change in masking is based upon numerous factors, including:

- A continued decline in COVID-19 cases in Yolo County;
- The wide availability of safe, free and effective vaccinations to reduce transmission; and
- Schools have access to higher-quality masks that better protect us against the virus.

The Governor did announce that local jurisdictions can keep stricter rules in place. We have communicated with the county and Yolo County Public Health will align with the state and not implement a local school mask mandate. This means that there will be flexibility of masking choice in schools and childcare facilities after Friday, March 11.

Will students and staff need to continue to mask INDOORS in schools through March 11? Yes. Per state guidance, [universal indoors masking remains](#) in place for specificized settings, [including K-12 schools, childcare](#), healthcare, public transit, and other settings. YCOE must follow the state's health and safety protocols. We would ask our parents, students and staff for your continued support in complying with the existing state guidance through March 11.

Do YCOE staff not located at school sites need to continue to mask INDOORS through March 11? Yes. With our school staff held to the stricter masking requirement by the state through March 11, we will continue with the current status quo of indoor masking through 11:59 pm on March 11.

Will students and staff need to continue to mask INDOORS in schools after March 11? No. After 11:59 pm on March 11, 2022, students and staff will be provided the personal choice to determine if they will continue to mask indoors (regardless of your vaccination status). As well, no students or staff will be prevented from continuing to wear a mask.

Do YCOE staff not located at school sites need to continue to mask INDOORS after March 11? No. Staff at non-school sites will not be required to mask indoors after 11:59 pm on March 11, 2022 (regardless of your vaccination status). Staff may continue to mask indoors if they choose.

Can students and staff continue to mask indoors after March 11? Yes. It is important to remember that indoor masking remains strongly recommended. No staff member or student will be prevented from continuing to wear a mask.

YCOE will continue to provide personal protective equipment (PPE) – including higher-quality masks – to sites as requested. Support Operations Services (SOS) will be sending an updated list of available PPE items to site leads.

With these changes to masking, we would ask YCOE staff to avoid questioning or creating stigma for those who will continue to mask **or** those that choose to unmask after March 11. Please be respectful of the personal decision made by your fellow co-workers and/or students.

People may continue to choose to mask in public or at work for a lot of reasons, including: haven't been able to get vaccinated yet, has a chronic illness, lives with someone with a weakened immune system, works with the public, cares for young children who are not old enough to get vaccinated yet, or volunteers with older individuals.

If you have concerns about others not masking, Yolo County Public Health Officer, Dr. Aimee Sisson, has reiterated that wearing a high-quality, well-fitting mask (KN95, N95 or FK94) is very effective in keeping you safe from the virus – even if others around you are unmasked. A recent [CDC study](#) showed that people who always wore a N95 or KN95 mask in indoor settings were 83% less likely to be infected with COVID than those who did not wear a mask.

Do students and staff need to continue to mask OUTDOORS in schools? No. On February 22, YCOE discontinued its outdoor masking mandate at all YCOE school sites.

How will families and staff be notified of masking changes? Associate Superintendent of Educational Services, Maria Arvizu-Espinoza, is working with our school principals to distribute letters and communication to families.

In closing, I consider the health and well-being of our students and staff to be of the utmost importance. I want to thank our YCOE family for your patience as health and safety guidance has developed and changed over the last two years. We have appreciated your support of health and safety measures that have kept our schools open and safe.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Garth Lewis". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "G" and a long, sweeping tail.

Garth Lewis
Yolo County Superintendent of Schools