

August 11, 2021

- Open Letter on Masking in Schools

On behalf of our Board of Directors and our 4,300 members across the state of North Carolina, the NC Academy of Family Physicians strongly supports in-person education with all students, teachers, volunteers, and other personnel taking appropriate precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19 by wearing masks or face coverings indoors.

We know this pandemic has taken a great toll on all of North Carolina. We also know that learning in -person is crucial to the development of our children and adolescents. We want all children to have the opportunity to learn in-person. Being with other children and adults is important for social and emotional development. However, the Delta variant of COVID-19 is currently spreading quickly throughout our state. We remain extremely concerned about this spread and the increasing number of hospitalizations for younger individuals including our children. As a result, we believe it is extremely important to take this proven public health measure – wearing masks or face coverings indoors -- to protect our children and those individuals who teach them.

Both research in North Carolina and elsewhere show that the consistent use of masks in schools by children and adults is effective in preventing the transmission of COVID. We stand with our pediatric colleagues in calling for mask wearing in all grades in an effort to keep students in school in-person. Furthermore, CDC guidance recommends that masks be worn by “all students, staff, teachers and visitors in schools regardless of vaccination status.” We support that guidance.

Right now, vaccines are not available to younger school children, and vaccination rates remain low among children aged 12-17. As a result, the best public health measure we can take to prevent transmission of COVID-19 while maintaining in-person education is mandatory mask wearing in schools. **We hope all of our school systems will put the health and well being of our children first and put required mask wearing in place as the 2021-22 school year begins.**

With best regards,



Jessica L. Triche, MD, President, NC Academy of Family Physicians