



Quinnipiack Valley Health District

A Regional Health Department Serving Bethany, Hamden, North Haven and Woodbridge, CT
1151 Hartford Turnpike, North Haven, CT. 06473. Tel. (203) 248-4528. Fax (203) 248-6671. www.qvhd.org info@qvhd.org

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Dear School Superintendents and the Board of Education members:

Given that the statewide school mask requirement will be eliminated effective Monday, February 28, 2022, it is incumbent upon local school officials to review current COVID-19 data to inform local decision-making on whether masks would be required in schools. Current COVID-19 data such as local community transmission levels, COVID-19 case rates, vaccination rates, and other metrics will continue to be monitored closely to determine the level of COVID-19 community transmission and help guide us in evaluating mitigation strategies to ensure the health and well-being of the school community.

In the town of Bethany, COVID-19 case rates per 100,000 population have been dropping steadily since the peak with a case rate of 155.8 on January 13, 2022. As of February 17th, the COVID-19 case rate per 100,000 population during the past two weeks is 29.6. Among those aged 5 -11 years old, 59.91% of children initiated a COVID-19 vaccination and 54.31% are fully vaccinated. Among those aged 12-17 years old, 66.39% of children initiated a COVID-19 vaccination and 62.82% are fully vaccinated.

In the town of Woodbridge, COVID-19 case rates per 100,000 population have been dropping steadily since the peak with a case rate of 161.6 on January 13, 2022. As of February 17th, the COVID-19 case rate per 100,000 population during the past two weeks is 38.4. Among those aged 5 -11 years old, 66.59% of children initiated a COVID-19 vaccination and 62.35% are fully vaccinated. Among those aged 12-17 years old, 94.44% of children initiated a COVID-19 vaccination and 89.65% are fully vaccinated.

Based on the current COVID-19 data and trends, it is encouraging to see the decrease in COVID-19 case rates and the vaccination rates among school-aged children within these communities.

As a local health district it is our role to share current guidance and recommendations from both federal and state authorities including the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the CT Department of Public Health (CTDPH). As such it is important to note that as of February 18th, CDC recommends universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors to K-12 schools, regardless of their vaccination status except those that meet the CDC exemptions for mask-wearing. We acknowledge that this recommendation on mask wearing may change thus we will advise our local partners of such.

That being said, the decision to require masks in schools is to be made by Superintendents and Boards of Education in consultation with their local health department because each school community is unique with its own community COVID-19 case rates and vaccination rates. In addition, their ability to fully implement

other mitigation strategies as much as possible to control the spread of COVID-19 should be considered. With the possibility of removing one layer of protection with masks, communities and individuals must decide on their level of risk tolerance.

If local school officials decide to make masks optional within the schools, we recommend the following:

- Promote COVID-19 vaccinations and testing
- Encourage individuals to stay home when sick or when they are in close contact with someone with COVID-19
- Notify school officials if an individual tests positive for COVID-19 or had a known exposure to someone with COVID-19
- Follow current CDC and CTDPH guidance on quarantine and isolation
- Implement other mitigation strategies such as ventilation, hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, social distancing, cleaning and disinfection
- Respect each individual's choice to wear a mask or not

Quinnipiack Valley Health District will continue to meet with Superintendents, Boards of Education, and other local officials to keep them informed of updated recommendations and to share current COVID-19 data and trends. We will consult with school officials if any adjustments to the mitigation strategies are needed as appropriate if there are any indications of increasing community transmission, a new emerging variant, any outbreaks, or increases in COVID-19 cases in their schools or communities.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Ann Wolujewicz

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Director of Health