

August 12, 2021

Dear Community,

We are so appreciative of what you all are doing to protect yourself, your loved ones, friends, and community during this pandemic. It has been a hard road to travel and, unfortunately, it looks like it's going to be a little longer.

As you know, COVID-19 cases are increasing across Delaware County and the nation. We have not seen numbers this high since February 2021. The good news is, although the vaccine is not 100% effective, it is very effective in preventing severe disease, hospitalization, and death. In fact, within the Health District from March 1 - July 20, 2021, 99% of our cases were unvaccinated, 93% of hospitalizations were unvaccinated, and 100% of the deaths were unvaccinated.

This week, Delaware County moved to a higher level of community spread, which was included in one of the two failing factors on our [5-critical factor report card](#). As a result, the Health District released an advisory for all persons - vaccinated and unvaccinated – to wear a mask inside public places and crowded settings.

We have worked closely and continue to work closely with all of our school districts to help make our children's 2021-2022 school year safe with layers of protection per the recommendations of the CDC. Our school guidance, including a quarantine guidelines flowchart, can be found under "For Schools/Daycare Facilities" on [DelawareHealth.org/covid-19](https://DelawareHealth.org/covid-19).

We have been asked by many community members, parents and caregivers to require or mandate masking in schools. **The passing of Ohio Senate Bill 22, effective June 23, 2021, limited the ability of a local health district to issue orders related to classes of persons without a documented case of disease and therefore, we are without authority to issue an order mandating schools to require everyone wear masks.** As situations develop, specific guidance - based upon real-time information - will guide the Delaware Public Health District in making public health order determinations. Any orders related to masks will be made in accordance with Chapters 3707 and 3709 of the Ohio Revised Code.

The Health District will continue to conduct contact tracing and case management as we have been doing for the past seventeen months, including issuing isolation and quarantine requirements. If there is an outbreak, within or outside a school setting, additional guidance and/or requirements will be given at that time.

Dedicated to your health,

Shelia L. Hiddleson, MS, RN  
Health Commissioner