



## OFFICE OF GOVERNOR ANDY BESHEAR

COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Crystal Staley

502-545-3714

[Crystal.Staley@ky.gov](mailto:Crystal.Staley@ky.gov)

Sebastian Kitchen

502-330-0799

[Sebastian.Kitchen@ky.gov](mailto:Sebastian.Kitchen@ky.gov)

### **Gov. Beshear: To Save Lives, Keep Schools Open and Protect Surging Economy, Masks Required in All Kentucky Schools, Child Care Settings**

*Health care, public health, school and business leaders support Governor's  
executive order*

**FRANKFORT, Ky. (Aug. 10, 2021)** – Today, Gov. Andy Beshear said in response to the highly contagious COVID-19 delta variant and recent U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance, he will require the following via an [executive order](#):

- All individuals – all teachers, staff, students and visitors – must cover their nose and mouth with a face covering when indoors in all public and private preschool, Head Start, elementary, middle and high schools (preschool through grade 12) in Kentucky, including but not limited to inside of vehicles used for transportation such as school buses, regardless of vaccination status; and
- All staff, visitors and children ages 2 and older who are able to wear a face covering must cover their nose and mouth with a face covering when indoors in all child care settings in Kentucky, regardless of vaccination status.

“We are in the midst of the fastest surge that we have ever seen during COVID right now. This move is supported by medical organizations, local health department leaders, businesses and education leaders. It is also supported by the Kentucky Chamber, representing 3,800 member businesses across the commonwealth,” said **Gov. Beshear**. “This is a united front of saving lives, keeping our kids in school and keeping our economy and workforce going.”

The [order](#) includes a list of exemptions.

The CDC now [recommends](#) universal indoor wearing of face coverings for all teachers, staff, students (ages 2 and older) and visitors to schools, regardless of vaccination status. The CDC recommends that all people ages 2 and older who are not fully vaccinated should wear a face covering while indoors in child care settings. The CDC also recommends that fully vaccinated people wear a face covering in public indoor settings in areas of substantial or high COVID-19 transmission.

The surge of hospitalizations of children with COVID-19 is causing children’s hospitals to become overwhelmed, with recent [CDC data](#) showing an average of 225 children with COVID-19 admitted to U.S. hospitals every day over the past week. The American Academy of Pediatrics [reports](#) that more than 93,000 children and teenagers were infected with COVID-19 from July 29 to Aug. 5. While Kentucky has had success in administering at least a first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine to 2,376,891 people, vaccinations remain unavailable for approximately 661,500 Kentucky children ages 11 and under, and less than 34% of all eligible Kentucky children between ages 12 and 17 have received their first dose of a vaccine.

Health care, public health, school and business leaders across Kentucky echoed support for the Governor’s order.

### **Health Care Leaders Share Experiences Treating Patients with Delta Variant**

Two practicing health care leaders joined the Governor’s briefing to share their recent experiences treating young patients infected with the COVID-19 delta variant.

“This is very different than what we saw the first time around. When we look across the country at the case rates, pediatric cases are representing anywhere from 14-17% of the total cases, which is very concerning,” said **Dr. Scottie B. Day, MD, FAAP**, physician-in-chief, UK HealthCare’s Kentucky Children’s Hospital in Lexington. “As many may know, an estimated 400 children have died, which

may seem like a small number relative to adults, but these are children. These are the future generations. We need to keep our children safe.”

“As we have been seeing more patients with the delta variant, we have had to deal with a new problem: younger patients who become unstable more unpredictably,” said **Miriam Haas, RN, BSN**, nurse manager at Norton Brownsboro Hospital in Louisville. “These patients tend not to have other health issues that contribute to their illness – they don’t have anything in common other than the delta variant and the fact that many of them were not vaccinated. Many of our COVID patients say that if they had it to do over again, they would have received the vaccine. As a nurse this has been the most difficult thing I have been through in my 13-year career. The things we have seen will never leave me.”

### **Public Health Leaders: Masks Are Simple Step to Keep Children Safe**

**Dr. Crystal Miller, director of the WEDCO District Health Department**, whose department addressed the first confirmed COVID-19 case in Kentucky last year, said the delta variant has created some of the greatest challenges local hospitals have faced since the start of the pandemic.

“We had the highest COVID admission rate in one of our local hospitals today that we’ve seen this entire pandemic,” said Dr. Miller. “The COVID unit is full. Our local hospital CEO told me that his day begins and ends with texts from other CEOs around Kentucky asking if there are beds available to transfer patients. This is the most concerning thing that I have been told since the pandemic began.”

“Wearing a mask is a simple step to help keep our children healthy and safe,” said **Rebecca Kissick, MSW**, public health director, Clark County Health Department. “The Clark County Health Department recognizes the benefit of in-person learning and support the Governor’s efforts to keep our children healthy in school.”

“As a minimal tool to help mitigate the risk of increased transmission of COVID-19 in our schools and as recommended by the CDC and the American Academy of Pediatrics, I support the Governor’s required mask mandate for K-12 schools until there is a significant reduction in disease to protect our unvaccinated and most vulnerable students and staff,” added **Randy Gooch**, executive director, Jessamine County Health Department.

Eleven other local health department leaders also [shared their support](#) for the executive order.

### **Education Leaders: Mask Requirements Provide Best Chance for Safe In-Person Learning**

**Kentucky Education Commissioner Dr. Jason Glass** agreed that mask requirements will give Kentucky school districts the best chance to safely return to full-time, in-person learning this fall with layered strategies in place to prevent COVID-19 infection and transmission. He also said the Kentucky Board of Education (KBE) will meet to discuss and act on an emergency regulation regarding face coverings in school facilities in a special-called meeting on Thursday, in coordination with the Governor's executive order.

“Our primary goal is to keep our students safe while prioritizing in-person learning, which our students both crave and need,” said Commissioner Glass. “We have been unambiguous that our guidance and decisions here at the department will be based on science and upon recommendations from public health organizations. Besides vaccinations (which our students under 12 are not yet eligible for), masking is one of the most effective virus mitigation strategies we can deploy. With strong and consistent precautions in place, Kentucky's schools have proven that we can safely open for in-person instruction. The Governor's executive order and the KBE's pending emergency regulation to require masking both put the health and learning of Kentucky's children first, and I support them unconditionally.”

**KY120 United – American Federation of Teachers** issued the following statement of support: “We are grateful for Gov. Beshear's strong leadership when it comes to keeping our most vulnerable Kentuckians safe in the classroom, our children. We applaud his willingness to follow science and the recommendations of the CDC and our state health departments when others have struggled to make the right decisions. We are excited to welcome children back to our buildings and classrooms, and look forward to a safe year of learning and growing across the commonwealth.”

**Kentucky Education Association (KEA) President Eddie Campbell** said: “Our schools count on our elected leaders to do what is best for the safety and health of our children, and to lead with that goal foremost in their minds. KEA supports Gov. Beshear's mask requirement in all public schools. Masks are a simple, low-impact, essential precaution that will protect students, educators and families and will hopefully allow schools to remain open. No one wants to return to extended virtual

learning or to the society-wide restrictions of 2020. But to avoid that, we must all use common sense to protect ourselves and each other.

“More than 90% of teachers and support staff nationwide have been vaccinated, according to a recent survey. Educators know the importance and value of in-person learning and they are doing their part to ensure that students can continue to learn in-person. But educators cannot do this alone; all public education stakeholders and every member of every Kentucky community needs to do their part to stop the spread of COVID-19 and keep our students in school.”

**Houston Barber, superintendent of Frankfort Independent Schools and president of the Kentucky Association of School Superintendents**, said: “The small sacrifice and commitment to wear masks has opened up the world of opportunities for our students to be successful during in-person school. Our team at Frankfort Independent Schools has been dedicated to ensuring we have in-person school for all of 2021-2022. We have had no spread of COVID-19 cases and have been in school since Aug. 2. We must remain faithful to this small sacrifice at this time to thrive and transform the lives and minds of our most precious gifts (students) without any disruption. It’s a team effort, and we must do this together!”

“The Jefferson County Teachers Association (JCTA) appreciates Gov. Beshear’s leadership in keeping Kentucky’s students and education employees safe and healthy through the COVID-19 pandemic,” said **JCTA President Brent McKim**. “As the commonwealth’s public schools reopen with full student schedules every day, we know most schools will not be able to maintain ideal social distancing between students, so it is more important than ever for all students and staff to wear masks when the COVID-19 infection rates are high, as they are now. Just across the river in Indiana, we have already seen students losing a great deal of instructional time and schools closing due to COVID-19 spread in schools. We don’t want that to happen in Kentucky. That’s why the teacher’s association support’s Gov. Beshear’s call for masking in our schools.”

**Business Leaders: Masking Requirement Strengthens Kentucky’s Workforce**  
**Winston Griffin, chairman of the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce and president and chairman of Laurel Grocery**, said requiring masks in schools will not only protect kids, it will protect their parents’ health and ability to work, ensuring Kentucky’s economy can continue to build momentum.

“The Chamber recognizes the importance of masking in schools at this time, because masking not only keeps our children and teachers safe but also because of its impact on the workforce,” said Griffin. “We learned last year that when a student gets exposed to the virus and needs to quarantine, this has an impact on the work-life of parents. Masking can help mitigate these issues and keep us all safer. But the best way to keep us safe and keep our economy moving is for all Kentuckians to get vaccinated.”

“We all thought that the worst was behind us with the COVID-19 pandemic. However, we are all looking at incredibly tough decisions to make sure we can keep all Kentuckians safe and keep our economy moving,” said **president and chief executive officer of the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce Ashli Watts**. “Employers are doing everything they can to keep their workforce safe and encourage vaccinations, which is the one way we know we can put a stop to this. Hundreds of students are now quarantined. That means that hundreds of parents are now probably not going to be able to go to work for the next couple of weeks. This cycle cannot continue.”

#### **COVID-19 Case Information Update**

Number of people who have received at least one vaccine dose in Kentucky: **2,376,891**

**New Cases Today:** 2,500

**Positivity Rate:** 11.05%

**Current Hospitalizations:** 1,251

**Current Intensive Care Admittances:** 339

**Currently on Ventilators:** 168

“This is the fastest and steepest rise in cases of the entire pandemic. We had a 43% increase in hospitalized COVID cases in Kentucky in one week,” said **Kentucky Department for Public Health Commissioner Dr. Steven Stack**. “We had a 32% increase in the number of hospitalized COVID patients in the intensive care units in one week. We had a 61% increase in number of COVID-19 patients on a ventilator in just one week. At this rate, in two weeks we will blow past our previous peaks.

“As of today, 15 hospitals that we are aware of have reported staffing shortages. Out of about 96 acute care hospitals in the state, that’s more than 15% of the

hospitals having staffing shortages. We must take this seriously and pull together like we have before.”

Dr. Stack said on July 9, 2021, Kentucky had a seven-day average of 4.75 new cases per day per 100,000 people. On August 9, 2021, Kentucky had a seven-day average of 43.83 new cases per day per 100,000 people.

“For hospitalizations, we are seeing the most significant, severe slope, meaning the rate of growth, that we have ever seen. We are doubling the number of Kentuckians hospitalized with COVID-19 every two weeks,” said **Gov. Beshear**.

The Governor encouraged all Kentuckians 12 and older to get a safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine and then sign up for a chance to win \$1 million or a full college scholarship at [ShotAtAMillion.ky.gov](https://ShotAtAMillion.ky.gov). Two \$1 million winners and 10 full-scholarship winners were announced on [July 2](#) and [July 30](#). On Aug. 27, another \$1 million winner and five more full-scholarship winners will be announced.

###