



Feb. 15, 2022

Superintendent's Message: Outdoor Masks Will Be Voluntary, Effective Immediately for TK-12

The outdoor mask requirement for schools, TK-12, has been lifted by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (LACDPH) effective 12:01 a.m. on Feb. 16, 2022. The SMMUSD School Board has directed us to lift the requirement effective immediately, with some exceptions. Staff and students may voluntarily continue to wear masks outdoors, if they so desire. Masks indoors are required.

This decision comes as a result of declining Omicron cases in the county and a sign that the surge is now waning. Given that the majority of students and staff in our district are now vaccinated and that our 5 to 12 year olds are authorized to be vaccinated, we feel confident that this alignment continues to be in the best interests of students and staff.

This will be a major adjustment on our campuses that require everyone to cooperate with this new protocol.

We will continue to require the following:

- Students who are on quarantine while on campus will need to continue wearing masks outside during the course of their quarantine. We will monitor this as much as possible, however, recognize that adhering to this requirement will be the responsibility of the students and parents, as well as the staff.
- Masks indoors for all staff and students are still required by our guiding agency, LACDPH. This requirement is unchanged at this time.

Masking is highly recommended at crowded outdoor events.

I spoke to Dr. Gilchick with LACDPH this afternoon, along with our district nurse liaison, and want to directly share his message to school districts:

It is with much pleasure that I announce that we in Los Angeles County are on the verge of officially entering our post-surge period. Tomorrow (February 16th) will be the 7th consecutive day that the number of hospitalized patients with COVID-19 will be below the threshold of 2,500. As such, the requirement in the health officer order mandating masking outdoors at schools, child care, and for youth sports is lifted. Similarly, the requirement to mask outdoors at mega-events is also lifted. The recommendation to wear a mask when in crowded outdoor settings remains in place. Schools, districts, youth sports programs, and child care facilities have the option to be more restrictive in their policies than Public Health orders require.

[A revised Health Officer Order](#) has been posted implementing these changes that go into effect at 12:01 AM on February 16. Revisions to the relevant Health Officer Order appendices (protocols) will be finalized and posted shortly.

*Thank you for your ongoing patience and cooperation.
Robert Gilchick, MD, MPH, Child and Adolescent Health Section Chief, Division of Maternal, Child, & Adolescent Health, Los Angeles County Department of Public Health*

This is a big milestone of this pandemic and we can take a moment to rejoice in seeing the smiling faces of our students and staff outside again, but must continue to remain vigilant in protecting against new surges. One method of prevention is to continue to stay home if you are sick and get tested to rule out COVID. Our [response testing hubs](#) in Santa Monica and Malibu are available to test out of isolation for positive cases and to check for positivity if not feeling well. The best way to ultimately accomplish the shared goal of further minimizing the effects of this virus is to get vaccinated.

We have a vaccination clinic planned for Santa Monica High School for Saturday, Feb. 26, from 8:30 a.m. to noon. This clinic will be held in front of Barnum Hall, with parking and entry through the 6th and Olympic gate. Registration is online at <https://myturn.ca.gov/>. Additional vaccination clinics in Santa Monica and Malibu are also available for a variety of dates and locations.

The ongoing cooperation and patience of our staff, parents and students have contributed to this great step on this journey. I appreciate it.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Dr. Ben Drati, Superintendent