

**Cobb County Board of Health
Recommendation for Consideration
Submitted by Cobb Board of Health Chair, Dr. Carol Holtz
September 7, 2021**

Position Request for Consideration:

Dr. Carol Holtz, Chair of the Cobb County Board of Health is requesting that the Cobb County Board of Health publicly and formally endorse the following statement:

The Cobb County Board of Health supports the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) and the American Academy of Pediatrics' (AAP) current guidance for reducing the spread of COVID-19 in our public and private schools.

This current guidance from both national health agencies notes that:

- 1. All policy considerations for school plans should start with the goal of keeping students safe and physically present in school.***
- 2. All eligible individuals should receive the COVID-19 vaccine.***
- 3. All students older than 2 years of age and all school staff should wear face masks at school (unless medical or developmental conditions prohibit use).***
- 4. Schools must continue to take a multi-pronged, layered approach to protect students, teachers, and staff, these interventions include, but are not limited to:***
 - Vaccination***
 - Universal mask use***
 - Ventilation***
 - Testing***
 - Quarantining***
 - Cleaning and disinfecting***

Background:

The Cobb County Board of Health (CCBOH) supports Cobb & Douglas Public Health's leadership as they strive to provide local public and private schools with the most accurate information on COVID-19 community spread and best-practice guidance to reduce transmission. We are committed to assuring that this agency is a trusted resource for planning, mitigation, case identification, and contact tracing.

SARS-COV2 was declared a worldwide pandemic in March of 2020 and has taken its toll with over 219 million worldwide infections and over 4.5 million deaths. In Georgia, we are in the midst of our 4th surge, with over one million confirmed infections and almost 20,000 deaths. This most recent surge has been caused almost exclusively by the Delta variant, with its increased transmissibility and proclivity for the unvaccinated.

<https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#variant-proportions>

In Georgia and in Cobb County, we are experiencing a phenomenal increase in total cases, case rates and positivity rates since the summer with a quadrupling of cases in children aged 5-17 in the last 5 weeks. Hospitalizations in school-aged children are also the highest since the beginning of the pandemic. The fact that many of these children are not eligible to be vaccinated and have been shown to spread the virus to others has been concerning since the beginning of this school year.

<https://dph.georgia.gov/covid-19-daily-status-report>

The strain on our local and state hospital systems is also a grave concern throughout the medical community, with critically low medical and critical care beds available. Greater than 90% of those people admitted for COVID at this time are deemed to be unvaccinated. The number of deaths being reported daily has also increased and causes more concern daily.

<https://www.wellstar.org/community/covid-19>

On August 5, 2021 the CDC issued the latest guidance for schools to use when planning for the year, in consideration of the highly contagious Delta variant, including mitigation measures to ensure reduced transmission in schools:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html>

In July 2021, the American Academy of Pediatrics issued their recommendations for school guidelines:

<https://www.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/covid-19-planning-considerations-return-to-in-person-education-in-schools/>

Per the August 2, 2021 Administrative Order set forth by Georgia's Commissioner of Public Health, all schools have local, final authority over their COVID-19 policies and quarantine protocols within certain parameters. For reference, see the attached link for the recent GA DPH Administrative Order:

<https://files.constantcontact.com/e100de88101/077941c9-74b7-4e02-b9e7-fe45d7258490.pdf>

Each school system has their own unique challenges to meet the needs of students and faculty and we respect their authority to make the final decisions. All questions regarding school protocols should be directed to the relevant school district.