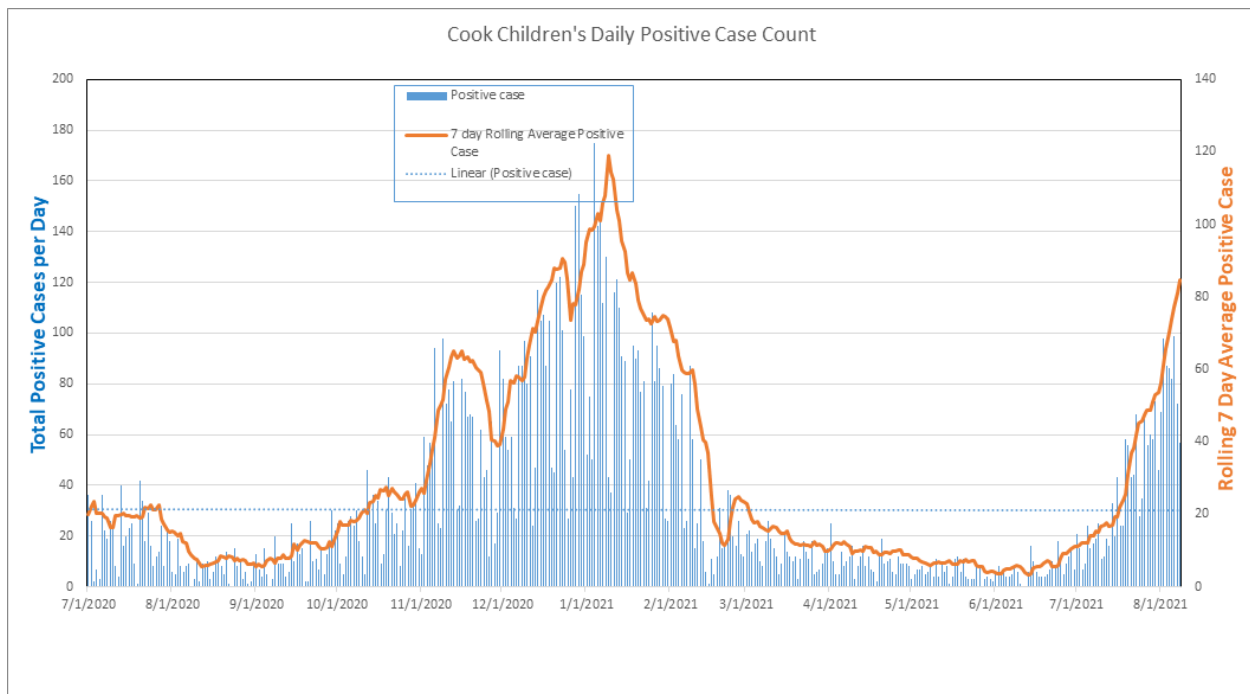


To the leadership at Fort Worth Independent School District:

**We, the physicians at Cook Children's Health Care System, are directly connected to the district or school either as concerned parents or as pediatricians who care for the children we mutually share with your district/school.**

We are writing to you to express our concerns about the Delta Variant of COVID-19 and to recommend that our school district implement safety protocols beyond those that have been in place this summer to address this exigent threat. The rapid increases in COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations and deaths locally and throughout the US in recent weeks are alarming and require an appropriate response. Indeed, we are seeing rising COVID-19 cases in our practices.



Please find below the Cook Children's 10-Point Guide for Safely Reopening Schools crafted by [Marc Mazade, M.D.](#), Medical Director of Infection Control and Prevention at Cook Children's Medical Center.

We stress key recommendations to mitigate the spread of this infectious new variant of the COVID-19 virus with the start of this school year:

- **Strongly encourage universal masking for students and staff in accordance with CDC and American Academy of Pediatrics recommendations.**
- **Minimize contacts for each student to the greatest degree possible.**



- **Encourage and support all opportunities for eligible children to receive COVID-19 vaccination.**

The **Cook Children's Promise** states: "Knowing that every child's life is sacred, it is the Promise of Cook Children's to improve the health of every child through the prevention and treatment of illness, disease and injury." **Please help us honor the health and sanctity of our children's lives through your sincere attention to these recommendations.** We would welcome the opportunity to collaborate with the district/school in promoting the health and safety of our community during this new and troubling phase of the pandemic. We will gladly provide additional data if it would be helpful, and we are available to answer any questions that arise.

We appreciate your time and look forward to further conversation on this important topic.

With respect and care,

The Cook Children's physicians of your school/district

<u>Physician Name</u>	<u>Division</u>
Alejandro De la Torre, MD	Endocrinology
Alice Phillips, MD, MPH	Primary Care
Allison Chisholm, MD	ENT
Amani Terrell, MD	Primary Care
Ana Rios, MD	Infectious Disease
Anish Ray, MD	Hematology/Oncology
Ankita Singh, DO	Primary Care
Anne Natterer, MD	Primary Care
Anthony Anani, MD, MBA, MPH	Gastroenterology
Anu Partap, MD	Health Equity
Anunya Hiranrattana, MD	Pulmonary
Ariel Brautbaur, MD	Genetics
Artee Ghandi, MD	Pain Management
Badreldin Bedri, MD	Nephrology
Ben Chang, MD	Pain Management
Ben Olsson, DO	Intensive Care
Ben Worseley, MD	Primary Care
Bianka Soria-Olmos D.O	Primary Care
Blake Palmer, MD	Urology
Bruce Eckel, MD	Primary Care
Carol Brennan, MD	Primary Care

Catherine Nicholas, MD	Health Plan
Celina Cepeda, MD	Nephrology
Chandra Beals, MD	Anesthesiology
Charles Saadeh, MD	ENT
Christina Chang, DO	Primary Care
Christina Sherrod, MD	Primary Care
Danielle Moye, MD	Cardiology
Dave Shahani, MD	Neurology
David Ewalt, MD	Urology
Deborah Vert, DO	Primary Care
Devona Martin, MD	Primary Care
Diana Carrasco, MD	Genetics
Diane Arnaout, MD	Primary Care
Donald Beam, MD	Hematology/Oncology
Donna Poliquit, MD	Primary Care
Donna Poliquit, MD	Primary Care
Eriel Hayes, MD	Primary Care
Errin Newman, MD	Pulmonary
Fernando Acosta, MD	Neurology
Frank McGehee, MD	Primary Care
Frank Sloan, MD	Urgent Care
Gretchen Eames, MD, MPH	Hematology/Oncology
Hari Kumaresan, MD	Psychiatry
Indran Liu, DO	Primary Care
Irene Castaneda-Sanchez, MD	Pathology
Israel Nosnik, MD	Urology
Jannette Bushard, DO	Primary Care
Jason Wang, MD	Pathology
Javier Gelvez, MD	Intensive Care
Jeff Barker, MD	Pain Management
Jeff Pugach, MD	Urology
Jenica Rose-Stine, DO	Primary Care
Jenny Urban, DO	Primary Care
Jill Radack, MD	Endocrinology
Jim Cunningham, MD	Pulmonary
Jim Marshall, MD	Intensive Care
Joel Steelman, MD	Endocrinology
Jonathan Kaye, MD	Urology
Juan Cocjin, MD	Primary Care
Justin Smith, MD	Primary Care

Kanika Bowen Jallow, MD	Surgery
Kara Starnes, DO	Urgent Care
Kara Stewart, MD	Primary Care
Karen Albritton, MD	Hematology/Oncology
Karen Schultz, MD	Pulmonary
Ketan Patel, MD, MPH	Nephrology
Kia Carter, MD	Psychiatry
Kim Burgess, MD	Primary Care
Kim Mangum, MD	Primary Care
Kim Mulson, MD	Hospitalist
Kirk Pinto, MD	Urology
Krishna Pancham, MD	Pulmonary
Kristin Favela, MD	Endocrinology
Kristen Meulmester, MD	Intensive Care
Kristen Pyc, MD	Psychiatry
Kristin Taylor, MD	Neurology
Kyle Brown, MD	Intensive Care
Lauren Akers, MD	Hematology/Oncology
Linda Thompson, MD	Intensive Care
Linh Samuels, DO	Primary Care
Lisa Guthrie, M.D	Primary Care
Lynn Coulter, MD	Primary Care
Marcus Ozaeta, MD	Primary Care
Maria Perez, MD	Rheumatology
Mary K Kukolich, MD	Genetics
Mary Suzanne Whitworth, MD	Infectious Disease
Matt Dzurik, MD	Cardiology
Meredith Drake, DO	Primary Care
Meredith Lavallais, MD	Psychiatry
Michelle Booth, MD	Urgent Care
Michelle Marcincuk, MD	ENT
Mihail Firan, MD	Pathology
Monica Fonseca Aten, MD	Urgent Care
Monica Goyal, D.O	Primary Care
Monica Pradhan, MD	Primary Care
Natalia Chaimowitz, MD	Immunology
Natalie Roberge, MD	ENT
Nicholas Rister, MD	Infectious Disease
Olivia Lehane, DO	Primary Care
Oscar Ghelber, MD	Pain Management

Pamela Barrera, MD	Primary Care
Pamela Burg, MD	Cardiology
Paul Thornton, MD	Endocrinology
Paul VandeVyver, MD	Pain Management
Paulette, See, MD	Primary Care
Rachel Talbot, MD	Psychiatry
Rachelle Herring, MD	Neurology
Randa Razzouk, MD, MSCI	Nephrology
Rebecca Luke, DO	Neurology
Rebecca Olvera MD	Primary Care
Robert Gillespie, MD, MPH	Nephrology
Sami Hadeed, MD	Pulmonary
Sandra Arca, MD	Primary Care
Sandra Peak, MD	Primary Care
Sandy Cope, MD	Pathology
Sani Roy, MD	Endocrinology
Sara Garza, MD	Primary Care
Scott Perry, MD	Neurology
Shannon Watts, MD	Primary Care
Shanti Nagireddy, MD	Psychiatry
Sharonda Ansley, MD	Primary Care
Sibo Zhao, MD	Neuro-Oncology
Smita Ranade, MD	Primary Care
Stacey Berry, MD	Pathology
Steve Chennankara, MD	Psychiatry
Suchi Parikh, MD	Primary Care
Susan Hsieh, MD	Endocrinology
Teena Thomas, MD	Endocrinology
Tina Dieber, MD	Genetics
Vicky Taloma, MD	Pulmonary
Vida Amin, MD	Primary Care
Vinai Modem, MD	Intensive Care
Vuong Dao, DO	Primary Care
Yvette Dzurik, MD	Pathology
Zara Siddiq, MD	Urgent Care

## Cook Children's 10-Point Guide for Safely Reopening Schools

1. Make sure all children are up to date on the routine childhood vaccinations needed for school entry. Access to medical offices, fear of leaving home and of waiting room exposures, and closed schedules of weary medical providers taking long-awaited vacations could result in a drop in vaccination rates against measles, mumps, rubella, pertussis, and the bacteria causing meningitis. A slight drop in vaccine coverage for measles, pertussis, and mumps translates quickly to a loss of herd immunity and outbreaks of serious, vaccine-preventable illnesses.
  2. Revisit the latest masking decisions in light of the recent surge in COVID-19 cases. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) advocate for masking in schools, especially in areas with moderate to high transmission of COVID-19. Follow guidance from your local health department, which will be in line with the current state of the pandemic and regional community health recommendations. We have learned during the pandemic that most children, 2 years of age and older, can wear a mask.
  3. Encourage COVID-19 vaccination of all eligible children and adults. COVID-19 efficiently spreads from adults and teenagers to younger children, not often the reverse. The key to keeping schools open during the COVID-19 pandemic is getting unimmunized parents and all eligible family members vaccinated.
  4. Arrange for mobile COVID-19 vaccination units to be present during orientation and events such as 'meet-the-teacher' nights. Gains in U.S. vaccine acceptance are likely to come amidst the group of people who don't have a solid reason to avoid vaccination. Surveys reveal that most of these people were hoping that the pandemic was wrapping up and that they would not have to take a risk by taking an "untested" vaccine. They are reasonable people who describe themselves as cautious, slow adopters of things that are new. Most are not necessarily opposed to vaccination philosophically. They were just hoping to wait out the pandemic while relying on social distancing, masking, and herd immunity to keep them from having to get a vaccine. With the loosening of restrictions and the surge in cases due to the Delta variant, many are now ready to stop holding out.
  5. Continue to utilize strategies promoting social distancing in the classroom (by using partitions, separating desks, and cohorting of student groups), during passing periods (by keeping them short to discourage standing around in small groups and conversing), and during meal times (by moving meals outside in the fresh air, limiting line length for meal service, and by observing social distancing).
  6. Re-enforce good hand-hygiene practices and cleaning of shared workstation areas with demonstrations that highlight effective hand hygiene and disinfection techniques.
  7. Quarantine unvaccinated children and school staff members exposed to COVID-19 per CDC guidance. Vaccinated exposed persons may still get sick with COVID-19 and could be contagious,
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though their risk of hospitalization and severe disease is extremely low. Quarantine exposed, vaccinated persons if they develop symptoms of COVID-19 until testing results are available.

8. Provide interactive and technologically sound, distance-learning alternatives for immunocompromised students who should not be in the classroom during the pandemic.

9. Encourage precautions for bus riders like masking and opening windows to promote adequate ventilation and reduce the transmission of COVID-19 while traveling to and from school.

10. Above all, send recurring reminders to parents not to send ill children to daycare and to school. Many parents are returning to the workplace for the first time in over a year. They may be experiencing pressures to be physically present, rather than staying home with an ill child. Memories are short when pressures are high. However, we are still in the midst of a global COVID-19 pandemic that has already claimed the lives of more than 600,000 people in the U.S.

Direct link to the top ten list available at:

<https://www.checkupnewsroom.com/cook-childrens-10-point-guide-for-safely-reopening-schools/>

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