

Alabama Chapter

INCORPORATED IN ALABAMA

American Academy of Pediatrics 
DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN®

19 S. Jackson St.
Montgomery, AL 36104
Phone: 334/954-2543
Fax: 334/269-5200
E-mail: lee@alaap.org
<http://www.alaap.org>

Alabama Chapter-AAP Position & Recommendations as of July 2021: Masking/Mitigating COVID-19 Outbreaks in Alabama Schools

The Alabama Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics strongly recommends all Alabama school superintendents to require face masks and other safety measures listed below for schoolchildren as we near the beginning of the 2021-2022 school year.

On July 16, al.com published a news piece entitled “9 children in Alabama hospitalized from COVID-19, one on ventilator as Delta spreads.” While designed to highlight a real increase in recent cases of COVID-19, the article does not fully encapsulate the harm that COVID-19 has caused to Alabama children. As of 7/8/2021, there have been 50,588 cases of COVID-19 among Alabama youth ages 0-17. The number of new cases of COVID-19 among children per week is increasing and is currently equivalent to the number per week added in the summer of 2020.

COVID-19 is not a benign disease among children. Although data in Alabama are limited, across the United States approximately one out of every 100 children with COVID will require hospitalization. Three hundred and forty-four children across the U.S. have died due to COVID-19, including eight here in Alabama. For those who survive initial infection, approximately three out of every 10,000 will experience a delayed, life-threatening multi-system inflammatory syndrome and up to half of all infected children may experience symptoms of long COVID, including fatigue, shortness of breath, heart palpitations and chest pain, headaches, difficulty concentrating, muscle weakness and more.

We also recognize that schools and school-supported programs are fundamental to child and adolescent development and well-being and provide our children and adolescents with academic instruction, social and emotional skills, safety, reliable nutrition, physical/occupational/speech therapy, mental health services, health services, and opportunities for physical activity, among other benefits. Everything possible must be done to keep students physically in schools.

It is critical to use the available science and data to develop policies to mitigate risk of COVID-19 outbreaks, while also recognizing that no policy will eliminate such risk.

Based on the available data, these are the recommendations supported by the Alabama Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics:

- All eligible individuals (students, faculty and staff) should receive the COVID-19 vaccine. In order to make sure the vaccine is accessible to students, schools may consider serving as vaccination sites.

Officers

President

L. Katrina Skinner, MD, FAAP
19087-B Greeno Road
Fairhope, AL 36532
251/928-5568
Fax: 251/928-2605
katski@bellsouth.net

Vice President

Nola Jean Ernest, MD, FAAP
526 Boll Weevil Circle
Enterprise, AL 36330
334/308-1166
Fax: 334/308-1019
nola.ernest@gmail.com

Secretary-Treasurer

Elizabeth N. Dawson, MD, FAAP
1300 US Hwy 231 S
Troy, AL 36081-3058
334/566-7600
Fax: 334/566-9181
nelso71@hotmail.com

Immediate Past President

Andrew W. Stubblefield, MD,
MPH, FAAP
421 W College Street
Florence, AL 35630
256/764-9522
Fax: 256/764-1139
stubblefield.wes@gmail.com

Executive Director

Linda P. Lee, APR

Continued on page 2

**Alabama Chapter-AAP Position & Recommendations as of July 2021:
Masking/Mitigating COVID-19 Outbreaks in Alabama Schools**

Page 2

- All students and school staff should wear face masks at school (unless medical or developmental conditions prohibit use). Mask policies should be universal to reduce transmission, especially given the current low vaccination rates in Alabama and potential difficulty in monitoring or enforcing mask policies that are based on vaccination status. Masking also has the added benefit of reducing transmission of other respiratory viruses (like influenza and RSV) that would take time away from school.
- School policies should remain flexible and should be adjusted to align with emerging information about the pandemic.

Furthermore, we recommend that schools continue to support quarantine requirements currently established by the Alabama Department of Public Health. Specifically,

- People who do not demonstrate evidence of full vaccination should be in quarantine for a minimum of 10 days after close exposure (i.e. less than 6 feet for more than 15 minutes to a person who tested positive for COVID).
- Quarantine duration may be shortened to 7 days if there is no evidence of symptoms and a negative COVID test on day 5 or 6 post-exposure.
- If there is not a universal masking policy, exposed people should be expected to wear a mask for 14 days regardless of the duration of their quarantine.
- People who are able to demonstrate evidence of full vaccination status do not have to quarantine but should be notified to monitor for symptoms.

School systems in Alabama were able to successfully complete the 2020-2021 academic year through the implementation of masking and other mitigation strategies. Given the increasing infection rates and high vaccination hesitancy in our state, the lack of implementation of these strategies during the 2021-2022 academic year will result in an increased number of pediatric infections and in a significant disruption of school-based activities.

Pediatricians are united with educators in our goal of keeping children in school for the entirety of the 2021-2022 school year. We believe that these guidelines will help ensure this goal.

July 20, 2021