



1615 Capitol Ave., Suite 73.771  
P.O. Box 997377, MS 7003  
Sacramento, CA 95899-7377

PHONE: 916.440.7594  
FAX: 916.440.7595  
<http://www.cclho.org>

**Jake Hanson, MPH**  
Executive Administrator  
[Jake.Hanson@cdph.ca.gov](mailto:Jake.Hanson@cdph.ca.gov)

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July 21, 2021

Tomás J. Aragón, MD, DrPH  
Director and State Public Health Officer  
California Department of Public Health

## RE: Indoor Masking Recommendation

Dear Dr. Aragón,

On behalf of the California Conference of Local Health Officers (CCLHO), I am writing to urge CDPH to recommend that everyone, regardless of vaccination status, wear masks indoors in public places to ensure easy confirmation that all unvaccinated people are masked and as an extra precautionary measure for all to reduce the transmission of COVID-19.

With cases and hospitalizations of COVID-19 rising throughout the state and increased circulation of the highly transmissible Delta variant, CCLHO believes indoor masking is a necessary preventative step to curtail the latest surge of COVID-19. In June, the Delta variants comprised [49 percent of all specimens sequenced in California and continues to significantly rise](#). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) noted that Delta variants are now responsible for [61 percent of new infections across the country](#).

We acknowledge that fully vaccinated people are well-protected from infections and serious illness due to known COVID-19 variants, including Delta variants, and vaccinating as many people as possible continues to be our best defense against severe COVID-19 infection. However, [only 61% of Californians are fully vaccinated](#), while case rates statewide have doubled and hospitalizations have increased by over 80% since the beginning of July. Additionally, more counties across California are [experiencing substantial or high transmission](#), according to CDC community transmission maps.

In the current environment of vaccine hesitancy, this leaves masking as truly the only non-pharmaceutical intervention left. A recommendation to wear masks indoors in settings like grocery or retail stores, theaters, and family entertainment centers, even if residents are fully vaccinated will add an extra layer of protection. Businesses should be urged to adopt universal masking requirements for customers entering indoor areas of their businesses to provide better protection to their employees and customers.

CCLHO was established in statute in 1947 to advise the California Department of Health Services (now California Department of Public Health), other departments, boards, commissions, and officials of federal, state and local agencies, the Legislature and other organizations on all matters affecting health. CCLHO membership consists of all legally appointed physician health officers in California's 61 city and county jurisdictions

We thank you for your continued partnership and collaboration with you about matters of importance to the state and local health officers. Should you have any questions, please contact me by email at [karen.relucio@countyofnapa.org](mailto:karen.relucio@countyofnapa.org) or by phone at (707) 253-4566.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Karen', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Karen Relucio, MD  
President, California Conference of Local Health Officers

