



COUNTY OF YOLO

Health and Human Services Agency

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Rescission of the Amended Order of the Yolo County Public Health Officer for the Wearing of Face Coverings in Workplaces and Public Settings

Effective February 16 at 12:01 am, the Amended Order of the Yolo County Public Health Officer for the Wearing of Face Coverings in Workplaces and Public Settings is rescinded. Once the rescission is in effect, all persons in Yolo County will be subject to [the State Public Health Officer Order of June 11, 2021 for Beyond the Blueprint](#). This State Order requires all individuals to follow the requirements in the [Guidance for the Use of Face Coverings](#) issued by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH).

CDPH's Guidance for the Use of Face Coverings requires unvaccinated persons to wear a mask in all indoor public settings and recommends that fully vaccinated persons do the same when risk is high. The Guidance also requires all persons, regardless of vaccination status, to wear a mask indoors in the following settings: public transit, K-12 schools, childcare, healthcare, correctional facilities, homeless shelters, and long-term care facilities.

The rationale for rescinding the Amended Order of the Yolo County Public Health Officer for the Wearing of Face Coverings in Workplaces and Public Settings is as follows:

1. Decoupling of infection and severe disease: When the Order of the Yolo County Public Health Officer for the Wearing of Face Coverings in Workplaces and Public Settings was first released in July 2021, the expressed intent was to continue the Order until the case rate was less than 2 cases per 100,000 residents per day for 7 consecutive days, a milestone that had been achieved before the highly infectious Delta variant emerged. Given the current dominance of the even-more-infectious Omicron variant, it is unlikely that a case rate of less than 2 can be reached in the near future, if ever. At the same time, the Omicron variant causes on average less severe disease than previous variants. While Yolo County case rates during the Omicron surge reached unprecedented levels, fewer individuals required hospitalization than during previous surges.
2. Primary goal is to flatten the curve: At the beginning of the pandemic, aggressive actions, including stay-at-home orders, were taken to slow the spread of COVID-19 and flatten the curve in order to avoid a situation in which more people would require hospitalization for COVID-19 than the healthcare system could support. Thanks to public cooperation with these orders, Yolo County successfully flattened the curve. Flattening the curve remains a key goal. Prior to the availability of vaccines, flattening the curve meant preventing as many infections as possible. Now that effective vaccines are available and Omicron causes milder disease, we have learned that we can successfully flatten the curve even with ongoing transmission.

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3. Decreasing case rates: Yolo County is reverting to CDPH's masking requirements in light of the improving COVID-19 situation in Yolo County. Yolo County's case rate is declining by approximately 10 cases per 100,000 residents per day. If this trend continues, Yolo County's case rate is expected to reach the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Substantial community transmission tier (case rate <14 per 100,000 residents per day) on or near February 16.
4. Wide availability of safe, free, and effective vaccines: The reversion to CDPH's masking requirements is also based on the fact that safe, free, and effective vaccines against the virus that causes COVID-19 are now available for everyone ages 5 and older. Persons who are fully vaccinated are 7.5 times less likely to be infected, 15 times less likely to be hospitalized, and 30 times less likely to die from COVID-19.
5. Children <5 are at low risk of severe disease, hospitalization, and death: While vaccines are not yet available for children under 5, studies continue to demonstrate that the risks of severe disease, hospitalization, and death are low for healthy children in this age group.
6. Availability of safe and effective treatments to prevent severe disease: Multiple effective treatments are available to prevent SARS-Cov-2 infection from progressing to severe disease, including oral antivirals and monoclonal antibody infusions. In addition, for those who are immunocompromised, a long-acting monoclonal antibody injection is available to prevent infection in the first place. These effective treatments also contribute to decoupling infection from severe disease.
7. COVID will always be with us: Moving away from mandatory indoor masking for all is an early step toward recognition that the virus that causes COVID-19 is not going away, and we must learn to live with it. Learning to live with COVID-19 will involve fewer government mandates and more government recommendations. These recommendations will continue to be provided to support members of the public in making individual decisions based on their own risk tolerance. Persons with a lower risk tolerance, perhaps because of underlying medical conditions or age, can choose to take additional precautions, such as by wearing masks. Yolo County residents have demonstrated themselves to be conscientious of COVID-19 risks and willing to follow public health requirements. Now that previous requirements have become recommendations, it is expected that residents will continue to follow these recommendations to protect themselves and others.

Ending mandatory masking is by no means a concession that masks do not work. Masks work. Wearing a mask that fits and filters well protects the person wearing the mask as well as others from transmission of the virus that causes COVID-19. Rather, ending the mask mandate is an acknowledgement that mandates are not the only way to support safer behavior, particularly over the long term. The Yolo County Health Officer strongly recommends that all persons, regardless of vaccination status, wear masks indoors in public spaces until the case rate falls into the Moderate transmission range, <7 cases per 100,000 residents per day, consistent with CDC guidance.

8. Increased clarity and consistency: Alignment of local requirements with State requirements provides consistency across the State, simplifying decision making for those who travel across county lines for work, school, or other reasons.
9. Ability to adapt approach as situation changes: Should the COVID-19 situation in Yolo County worsen in the future, perhaps due to a variant that causes severe disease or that evades immunity from vaccines and prior infection, universal indoor masking could be reinstated. In general, sustained case rates greater than 14 per 100,000 residents per day will prompt re-evaluation of indoor masking requirements.



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February 9, 2022