



## MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **With Vaccine Supply Still Limited and Newly Identified Strains of COVID-19 in the Region, Pierce County Public Health Requires Masks to Be Worn in Indoor, Public Spaces**

Pierce County Public Health (PCPH) released an advisory order requiring individuals age five and older in Pierce County to wear a face mask when in an indoor public space where a non-household member is also present in the same room or enclosed space. This advisory order shall be in place until June 4th, 2021, which is the last day of the school year for most K-12 schools in Pierce County. The advisory may be found [here](#) and a frequently asked questions document can be found [here](#).

Although vaccine roll-out is going well in Pierce County, supply is still limited and most adults have not had their chance to be vaccinated. AZ Snyder, Health Officer/Public Health Director states, "Only a quarter of adults in Pierce County have received their first vaccine. None of the vaccines have been approved yet for individuals under the age of 16. We are seeing an increase of newly identified strains of COVID-19 in the region, which may compromise what existing immunity we've built. Hospitals in the Twin Cities metro report less than 2% of ICU beds were available on March 30<sup>th</sup>. Doing the right thing now will allow us to finish out the school year, keep those waiting for vaccines safe, and ensure this summer is the best it can be," said Snyder.

Masks are a simple intervention to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 and are a proven intervention to prevent outbreaks in schools. COVID-19 spreads mainly from person to person through respiratory droplets that travel through the air when you cough, sneeze, talk, shout, or sing. Masks help reduce the spray of droplets when worn over the nose and mouth. The most protective masks are those that fit snugly against the face and have multiple layers.

Because it is possible for vaccinated people to contract COVID-19 and spread it to others, and because of the presence of variants in the region, people who have been vaccinated must also continue to mask while in public.

Credible complaints for violation of this advisory order may be investigated by PCPH. Investigations may result in a directive being issued to a business or individual. This advisory order outlines the same enforcement process as the now-expired mass gathering advisory order. "This is not about punishing anyone. It's about communicating the importance of continued masking to all Pierce County residents," said Snyder.

Information and data related to COVID-19 in Pierce County can be located by visiting: <https://covid-piercecounty-wi.hub.arcgis.com/>

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