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CITY OF RACINE, WISCONSIN
PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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Racine County's Public Health Officers Recommend Universal Masking in Schools
As Delta variant cases surge, data shows a 7,250% increase in case rates over the past 15 days

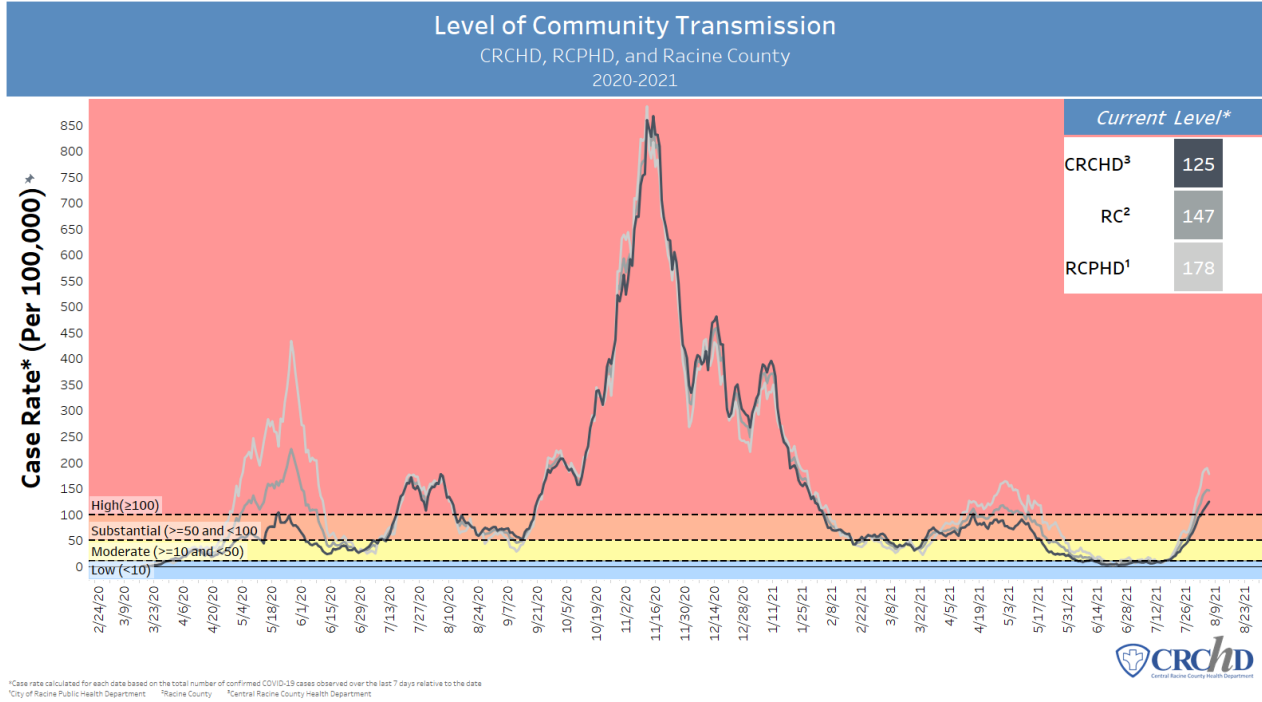
RACINE - (August 6, 2021) – Yesterday Milwaukee County local health department officials released a press release to local school boards. The two Racine County health officers echo the recommendations and words of these officials in Milwaukee County who unanimously recommended the implementation of universal masking requirements for teachers, staff, students, and visitors in K-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status. This recommendation is in alignment with guidance from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC), the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) (AAP), and most recently the [Wisconsin Department of Health Services](#) (DHS).

As school boards meet and prepare for the 2021-22 school year, Racine County public health officials ask Racine County school boards to do all in their power to protect the health and safety of students. “We hope that this current surge in cases will not last long but until the surge abates, simple but effective prevention measures must be taken for the well-being of all in our communities, especially to protect those too young to be vaccinated and the highly vulnerable,” said Dottie-Kay Bowersox and Margaret Gesner, Health Officers for City of Racine and Central Racine County Health Departments. The CDC classifies Racine County as having a high level of community transmission which makes the new CDC recommendation for universal masking in schools even more imperative.

According to Wisconsin Department of Health Services, rates of COVID-19 infection in children and adolescents are comparable to rates in adults but cases in children and adolescents have been under-detected. Children and adolescents can also transmit COVID-19 infection to others, as evidenced by outbreaks among adolescent attending camps, sports events, and schools as well as for children and adolescents to household contacts. Studies of COVID-19 transmission show that schools that have implemented layered prevention strategies – including face masks – have been successful in limiting transmission in schools. Because of this, Racine County public health officials urge school boards to consider these facts and vote in alignment with national and statewide back-to-school universal masking guidance to keep children safe and healthy. The Delta variant is highly transmissible and adding another layer of protection on top of vaccination is needed to stop the spread.

Given new evidence on the Delta variant, the AAP, CDC, and DHS have updated their school guidance, recommending universal indoor masking and a layered approach to COVID-19 prevention strategies. This includes physical distancing, enhanced ventilation, and hand washing heading into the fall. A significant portion of the student population is not eligible to receive the vaccine, and masking is a proven tool in mitigating the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

Vaccination is the most important prevention strategy for those currently eligible. Vaccination provides protection against COVID-19 and new variants, but also eliminates the need for quarantine if exposed. Pharmacies, medical clinics, and public health continue to have COVID-19 vaccine available for those interested in vaccination.



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