

Massachusetts officials will allow statewide school mask mandate to expire

After consulting with medical experts and state health officials, the Commissioner will not renew the state mask requirement after it expires on February 28, 2022.

The decision was made in consultation with infectious disease physicians, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, and other medical experts. Vaccinations are the best protection against COVID-19, and Massachusetts has among the highest vaccination rates of young people and is a national leader in overall vaccination. In Massachusetts, 52 percent of all individuals who are fully vaccinated have received a booster dose, compared to 42 percent of the national population.

Effective Monday, February 28, the DESE mask requirement will be lifted statewide. The Commonwealth's high vaccination rates and widespread availability of COVID-19 testing for school personnel and students support this decision.

Masking continues to be required on all school buses, per federal order.

More than 40 schools have already received approval from DESE to remove the mask requirement. With the removal of the statewide mask requirement, additional schools no longer need to apply. With the lifting of the statewide mask requirement, school districts no longer need to request a waiver from DESE to remove masks in school buildings where 80 percent of staff and students are vaccinated. Masking will be a community choice in schools across the Commonwealth, regardless of vaccination rates within a school; however, a school district could establish a local requirement.

DESE continues to recommend that districts and schools adopt a layered approach to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in school settings. DESE and DPH continue to strongly urge all eligible individuals to receive the COVID-19 vaccine and booster and continue to support schools with vaccination clinics. Other mitigations include participating in the statewide COVID-19 testing program, maintaining good hand hygiene practices, and staying home when sick.