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MEDIA CONTACTS:
Dan Tierney: 614-644-0957
Breann Almos: 614-644-0957

Governor DeWine, Ohio Children's Hospitals Association Appeal to School Districts to Require Masks

(COLUMBUS, Ohio)— Ohio Governor Mike DeWine today joined with the Ohio Children's Hospitals Association in a direct appeal to school superintendents to require masks for staff and students during the current surge of the coronavirus.

The plea was made during a virtual meeting today with superintendents and the clinical leadership from six Ohio children's hospitals including Dayton Children's Hospital, ProMedica Russell J. Ebeid Children's Hospital, Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, Nationwide Children's Hospital, Akron Children's Hospital, and University Hospitals Rainbow Babies & Children's Hospital. The recording of the zoom call will be available at the Ohio Children's Hospital Association website at ohiochildrenshospitals.org later today.

"The data are now clear that there is a higher level of COVID-19 in school districts where masks are not required," said Governor DeWine. "If we want our schools to stay open, the best way to do that is for those 12 and over to get vaccinated. But because those under 12 are still too young to be vaccinated, we need students who come in to school to wear a mask until we get through this."

Data that support this appeal include:

- Since August 15, 2021, there have been 29,823 Ohio school-aged kids ages 5 to 17 with confirmed and probable cases of COVID-19.
- Cases among this age group increased 198 percent from the week of August 15th as compared to the week ending September 4.
- As reported yesterday by the American Academy of Pediatrics, COVID-19 cases among children have increased 240 percent nationally since early July when the Delta

variant began to surge. During that same period in Ohio, there has been a 2000 percent increase in cases among Ohio children.

- COVID-19 cases are increasing at nearly twice the rate among school-aged kids as compared to the rest of the population. This past week Ohio saw a 44 percent increase among school-aged children and only a 17 percent increase among the rest of the population.
- Over the two-week period ending September 4, 2021, there was an average of 909 cases per 100,000 school-aged Ohio kids versus 561 cases per 100,000 people comprising the rest of the population.
- The 16 days with the highest number of cases per day throughout the entire pandemic for kids aged 5 to 17 in Ohio have all been in the last 19 days. This includes every day except the three days of the Labor Day weekend.
- In Ohio school districts where masks are optional, among school-aged kids, there are both higher case rates per 100,000 at 945.7 and a greater week-over-week increase in cases. School districts where masks are optional have seen a 54 percent week-over-week increase compared to a 34 percent increase in school districts where masks are either required for all or required for some (usually K-8th grade).

Nick Lashutka, President and CEO of the Ohio Children’s Hospital Association

“This is a perfect storm, and it’s impacting kids like it hasn’t before. It’s a combination driven by COVID-19 cases increasing, primarily driven by the Delta variant, increasing respiratory illnesses, more mental health challenges, and staffing challenges. Everyone can agree that our number one goal is to keep children in schools five days a week, and that’s what we shared with the state’s superintendents today.”

Debbie Feldman, President and CEO of Dayton Children’s Hospitals

“Ohio is truly blessed to have some of the best children’s hospitals in the country. We pride ourselves on meeting the needs of our kids. Our commitment is really threatened right now. For a long time, COVID-19 was perceived as a disease that didn’t impact children. That’s not the case anymore. Today, 25 percent of COVID-19 cases are in kids. We’re feeling that in our children’s hospitals.”

Paula Grieb, DNP, RN, Chief Nursing Officer, ProMedica Russell J. Ebeid Children’s Hospital

“In the city of Toledo and at Ebeid Children’s Hospital, we’ve seen significant in-patient and out-patient volumes, and we’ve seen a significant increase in kids with respiratory illnesses. We had a significant event occur last night in Lucas County. That means if a rescue squad responded to a 911 call and picked up a patient to take them to a hospital that was on EMS bypass, that rescue squad would not be allowed to stop at that hospital. The county EMS system would have to dispatch each call one at a time. That means a patient wouldn’t necessarily go to the hospital closest to them or best-suited to take care of the patients’ needs.”

Rustin Morse, MD, CEO, Nationwide Children’s Hospital

“We are in uncharted territory. Not just in children’s hospitals, but adult hospitals as well. The infrastructure is strained like it hasn’t been before. We are asking people to get vaccinated if they aren’t already, and we are asking them to wear masks.”

Patty Manning, MD, Chief of Staff, Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center

“Our inpatient numbers are the highest they’ve been. Our ICUs are caring for more patients than there’s ever been. More children are on ventilators than there has ever been. There are more children than ever entering our emergency departments and our urgent care centers. That impacts the care of all children, not just those that are COVID-19 positive.”

CASE DATA/VACCINE INFORMATION

- In-depth COVID-19 data for Ohio: coronavirus.ohio.gov.
- Ohio's central vaccine scheduling system: gettheshot.coronavirus.ohio.gov
- All vaccine providers: vaccine.coronavirus.ohio.gov
- More vaccine information: coronavirus.ohio.gov/vaccine

Video of today's full update, including versions with foreign language translation, can be viewed on the [Ohio Channel's YouTube page](#).

For more information on Ohio's response to COVID-19, visit coronavirus.ohio.gov or call 1-833-4-ASK-ODH.