

Los Angeles County Department of Public Health
Coronavirus Telebriefing for Institutes of Higher Education
Sept. 3, 2021

Barbara Ferrer, PHD, MPH, MEd, Director
Los Angeles County Department of Public Health

Robert Gilchick, MD, MPH, Child and Adolescent Health Section Chief
Los Angeles County Department of Public Health

Nava Yeganeh, MD, MPH, Medical Epidemiologist
Acute Communicable Disease Control Program

SITUATIONAL AWARENESS (FERRER)

- County still has high transmission, although the County has seen a 22 percent decline in its case rate over the past two weeks: 159 new cases/100,000; back on Aug. 19, County had 204 cases/100,000
- Hospitalization numbers are plateauing: 1,700 new hospitalizations/day
- Deaths continue to rise: 6 percent over past week
- It is clear the virus continues to cause life-threatening disease among unvaccinated
- LA County's case numbers are better than the state
- Masking, physical distancing and infection control remain effective tools
- Delta variant accounts for 99 percent of sequenced strains
- County is watching reports on the new variants of concern
- Vaccines provide the most protection possible and we're anxious to note that those vaccines show they are effective and safe; almost 5.3 million residents are fully vaccinated
- Out of that 5.3M, 37,614 tested positive – up 15 percent from last week – less than 1% have become infected with COVID
- Our highest priority is to make the vaccine accessible to everyone
- 64 percent of residents 12 and over are now fully vaccinated
- 56 percent of the LA County population (10 million) is vaccinated
- Booster shots: Unclear what the guidance will be, but it is expected to come the middle to end of September. It is anticipated there will be some prioritization based on date a person received their last dose or based on high-risk status

INSTITUTES OF HIGHER EDUCATION (GILCHIK)

One additional change to guidance with respect to modified quarantine for students who are exposed but fully vaccinated and asymptomatic: a student who fits this criteria can choose not to be quarantined and instead be tested daily for 5 consecutive days. As long as they test negative every day, they can participate in classes and other activities (sports, music, etc)

Guidance to be released next week: Exemptions to indoor masking for students in music classes. Guidance will come with additional requirements that will limit those opportunities to students who are fully vaccinated

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q. Even with mandated vaccination or testing, we have concerns expressed by faculty regarding social distancing in the classroom. Are there social distancing requirement indoors with people being masked?

On the modified quarantine is that for students and athletes who live on campus or does it apply to students who go to community colleges or commuter colleges?

A. There are no requirements for distancing indoors or outdoors. Obviously, where you can distance, do it.

Modified quarantine: Yes, it applies to all students in community colleges and commuter campuses as well as those students who live on campus.

Q. International students have rec'd WHO approved, but these students are asking if they can get Moderna or Pfizer or J&J? Can they?

A. We haven't issued any guidance on that. There's no recommendation that people who have been vaccinated with a different approved vaccine should get more. It's not recommended.

Q. Eating in food halls is still allowed? Not eating, do they have to wear masks?

A. Yes. It is permitted but students should wear masks if they are in line or waiting. They can take off masks to eat or drink. Gathering outdoors to eat is better.

Q. Indoor masking requirements: we have spaces that have 7-foot partitions and we require vaccinations. If you have a large space with partitions, are individuals required to wear masks in that space?

A. It's ok if the partitions if they are of a good height.

Q. Are you recommending social distancing outside?

A. Yes, if there is a crowd of people without masks waiting in line to register, for example. But, moving from class to class, no. We want to avoid the risk associated with large crowds.

Q. Modified quarantine: what kind of test are you talking about? Rapid test or PCR?

A. We're allowing either test.

Q. Can you talk about the "close contact" exposure definition: is it still within 6 feet and cumulative 15 minutes? Would you notify the whole class?

A. The definition hasn't changed, regardless of masking and vaccination. CDC has something slightly different as does the state but right now this is where we have landed. You have to decide what is best for your setting.

Q. The challenge we're looking at is fully vaccinated students who have a close contact exposure by the time we call them, they have some minor non-specific symptoms like congestion. We often will bring them in to test them. If they are negative, do these folks really need to go into isolation or quarantine?

A. The rule is clear, fully vaccinated people don't have to quarantine if they are asymptomatic. If they are negative, it's clear they are dealing with something other than COVID-19. There are times to really rely on clinical staff to do a more in-depth examination and history (to check for allergies, etc).

Questions: (877) 777 5799