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Public Health
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Shelby County Health Department

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AMENDED HEALTH ORDER NO. 24 CALLS FOR MASKING IN SCHOOLS

SHELBY COUNTY, TN – Today the Shelby County Health Department issued an amended Health Order No. 24 that calls for universal masking in all K-12 schools, preschools and day care centers, for teachers, staff, students and visitors, regardless of vaccination status.

The amended health order is in alignment with recently released guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that recommends that all persons, including those who are fully vaccinated, wear masks in indoor public settings in areas such as Shelby County where COVID-19 transmission is high.

This amendment is deemed necessary because Health Department data indicates an alarming increase in pediatric COVID-19 cases in recent weeks. More than one quarter of the current active cases are among those 17 and younger. Regional hospitals also report an increase in COVID-19 pediatric cases, many of whom require intensive care and ventilatory support.

The amended Health Order No. 24 was issued after conversations with a variety of school leaders in both private and public school districts within Shelby County. The consensus among school leadership indicated that universal masking would be acceptable as an additional prevention tool, part of a multi-layered approach to combat COVID-19.

“Protecting the health of Shelby County children is one of the Health Department’s highest priorities,” said Health Director, Michelle Taylor. “Masks, when worn correctly and consistently over the nose and mouth, have been shown to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and other infectious respiratory diseases. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also recommends masks in schools, which serve many children under the age of 12 who are not yet able to be protected from COVID-19 through vaccination.”

“Vaccination is still the best protection against COVID-19 infection,” said Health Officer Dr. Bruce Randolph. “But masks also provide protection in crowded indoor settings like schools. Shelby County Health Department also highly recommends vaccination for all parents, teachers and school staff members to protect themselves and school students.”

The text of amended Health Order No. 24 is available here:
www.shelbytnhealth.com/healthdirectives.

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