



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Sonoma County health officer allows some groups option to go maskless indoors**

SANTA ROSA, CA – Sonoma County Health Officer Dr. Sundari Mase today amended a health order to allow certain stable groups of people, such as those in gyms, classes and offices, the option of lifting the mandate on wearing masks indoors if they verify that all members of the group are fully vaccinated for COVID-19.

The move adds an additional exception to the order requiring face coverings in all indoor public settings, which Dr. Mase issued Aug. 3 to help control the surging Delta variant. The exception is voluntary, so employers, hosts, and organizers may continue to enforce universal indoor masking, regardless of vaccination status.

The amendment applies to indoor gatherings of 100 or fewer people including in offices, gyms, fitness centers, employee commuter vehicles, religious gatherings, college classes, and other organized gatherings of individuals who meet regularly. Employers, hosts, and organizers must control access to the setting, and the setting cannot be open to the general public. It does not allow proof of a negative test as a substitute for proof of vaccination.

“Our face covering requirement has been a critical tool in our community’s battle to control the spread of COVID-19,” Dr. Mase said. “Given that our case rate is now on the decline, it makes sense to loosen the requirement for certain stable groups of fully vaccinated people. But, in general, we must

continue to wear our masks in most indoor settings in order to limit the spread of the virus during the coming winter months.”

Sonoma County and other Bay Area jurisdictions recently announced metrics that will need to be met before any county will lift the indoor mask mandate for the general public. These include having a case rate of less than 50 per week per 100,000 residents for at least three consecutive weeks, having a “low and stable” hospitalization rate and having 80 percent of the county’s entire population fully vaccinated or waiting at least eight weeks from the approval date for pediatric vaccines for those ages 5 to 11.

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