

Kelly M. Lyman
Superintendent

February 14, 2022

Dear Mansfield Families,

In recent days you may have heard news reports about potential changes in mask requirements that have an impact on schools. I would like to try to clarify what we know at this time.

Wearing masks in school is required due to an executive order imposed by the governor. This executive order, and others, is set to expire February 15. Last Monday, Governor Lamont announced that he is in favor of rescinding the executive order that requires masks be worn in schools. However, he favors a rollback plan that continues mask wearing until February 28. According to a press release from his office, the mask rollback plan is contingent upon the Connecticut General Assembly voting to extend – through legislation – the governor’s existing executive orders. The governor has stated that he intends to continue the mask requirement only until February 28. A bill extending his executive powers, the first step in the rollback, passed the House of Representatives and is expected to move to the Senate for consideration today.

The Commissioners of Education and Public Health are considering the implications of these changes, and guidance is expected to be shared with local health districts later this week. Although these commissioners may retain some state authority to require mask wearing now or in the future, after February 28 local masking requirements in schools are expected to fall to local boards of education. However, we do know that masking requirements on school buses and all public transit is federally mandated, and there is no state or local authority to roll that back.

We will follow this situation closely, review all guidance provided, and keep you informed as any changes unfold or actions are considered by the Mansfield Board of Education. It is encouraging to see that positivity rates are falling, and with another 2.5 weeks before the end of the month, we hope that COVID cases will decline even further. Therefore, for now we welcome your continued cooperation as we implement a variety of strategies to keep the virus from spreading in our schools. We know that the best protection against the virus is vaccination. The higher percentage of our population that is vaccinated, the stronger we are as a group to fight off the spread. We asked our district’s medical advisor, Dr. Kristen Gildersleeve, to offer her perspective on vaccines, and she offers this message found below. Please consult your family physician if you have any questions about vaccinating your child(ren).

An Important Message from Dr. Kristin Gildersleeve, Mansfield Schools Medical Advisor

Dear Mansfield families,

Like all of you, I cannot wait to get back to a more “normal” life and school experience! As your school health advisor, I want to share my thoughts on how best to try to achieve that goal.

We have now given over 9 million vaccines to kids ages 5-11 across the country! There is an excellent reporting system in the U.S. called VAERS (Vaccine Adverse Events Reporting

System) that keeps close track of all side effects. ***The good news is that after the 4,000 kids vaccinated in the studies, and the 9 million since the rollout to the general public, there is overwhelming evidence that the vaccine is safe.*** With only 100 reports of serious side effects (which was most often things like short-lived fever and vomiting), this vaccine is one of the safest things we do in medicine. That's less than 1 in 90,000!

Sadly, however, we are seeing more kids admitted to our own Children's Hospital with complications from COVID--ten in just the last week.

Although children are generally less effected by COVID than adults health-wise we can all agree they have paid a huge price socially, academically, and mentally. The best way to get them back to healthy living (with no masks soon we hope!) is to have as many people vaccinated as we can.

Please discuss with your trusted health provider for further information on kids and vaccines.

Yours in health,

Kristin Gildersleeve, MD

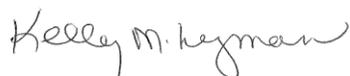
If you are seeking the vaccine for your children, there are several convenient opportunities close by in the coming days—just walk in:

- Every Thursday afternoon at Mansfield Town Hall from 2 to 6 pm
- Monday, Feb. 14 at Patriots Park Lodge, Coventry from 3:30 to 7 pm
- Friday, Feb. 18 at EASTCONN Conference Center, Hampton from 2 to 4 pm

Details are available at <http://www.ehhd.org/> Eastern Highlands Health District keeps a comprehensive listing of clinics in our region, so please watch their site for updates and resources.

Please reach out to your school principal or my office should you have questions, and know that we will keep you informed of any changes.

Sincerely,



Kelly M. Lyman