

MEDIA RELEASE

ERIE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH



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COUNTY OF ERIE
OFFICE OF THE
COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Erie County Department of Health rescinds religious exemption from masking order

Erie, PA — Erie County Department of Health has amended the Order of the Erie County Department of Health Requiring Face Coverings For Persons Within Erie County Public and Private Schools. Effective immediately, this amendment removes the religious exemption which was included in the order.

On August 23 the Department issued an order directing face coverings to be worn in all public and private preschools, secondary and primary schools. Section 3 of the order contained the following exception: "Individuals with a bona-fide religiously based objection to wearing a face covering." The original order and the amendment can be found at eriecountypa.gov/covid19.

"After receiving feedback from school administrators and consulting with the county solicitor, it has become apparent this exemption is being misapplied in a manner which undermines the effectiveness of the order," said Melissa Lyon, director of the Erie County Department of Health. "The purpose of the order is to keep students, school staff and the community safe, therefore it is imperative the order is applied as intended."

As of 11:59 p.m. on Aug. 25, there are 82 new positive cases of COVID-19 reported in Erie County, bringing the cumulative case count to 22,358. The total deaths due to COVID-19 since March 2020 is 486.

This [information](#) and other data such as reports on vaccination demographics can be found at eriecountypa.gov/covid-19. Related data is also available at the Pennsylvania Department of Health website health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Pages/Cases.aspx. Data on transmission rates can be found in the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) website covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view.

Masking

Erie County currently has a high rate of transmission according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The public is reminded that the CDC guidelines state all people, including those who are fully vaccinated, should wear masks indoors in areas with substantial to high transmission rates of COVID-19.

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Wearing a mask that covers the mouth and nose has been proven to reduce the spread of infectious respiratory illnesses such as COVID-19. Studies on the effects of wearing masks have proved that there is no change in oxygen or carbon dioxide levels when people wear cloth and surgical masks while resting and exercising.

Get vaccinated

Vaccination helps the body prevent severe illness and lessens the likelihood of needing hospitalization. Nearly all hospitalizations and deaths due to COVID-19 have been among unvaccinated persons.

All unvaccinated residents are encouraged to get vaccinated. COVID-19 vaccines were developed by experts and are safe. Free vaccines are available for residents of Erie County ages 12 years and older. Finding vaccines in nearby locations can be done by:

- texting your ZIP Code to 438829
- visiting [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov)
- calling 1-800-232-0233

A free mobile vaccination clinic organized by the Erie County Department of Health is available to the residents of Erie County. No insurance is needed and walk-ups are welcome. For the schedule of upcoming mobile clinics and other free clinics, visit eriecountypa.gov/covid-19/covid-19-vaccine.

Get tested

Community members are reminded to get tested for COVID-19 if exposed to anyone who is positive for COVID-19 or if exhibiting its symptoms such as coughing, difficulty breathing, fever or chills, muscle or body aches, vomiting or diarrhea, or loss of taste or smell.

Testing results can help determine appropriate care and treatment if needed. For schedule of upcoming mobile clinics and other free clinics, visit eriecountypa.gov/covid-19/covid-19-testing-information.

Questions about COVID-19 may be directed to Erie County Department of Health at 814-451-6700 or ecdinfo@eriecountypa.gov.

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