PRESS RELEASE
FEBRUARY 10, 2022

SANTA BARBARA COUNTY TO RESCIND LOCAL HEALTH OFFICER ORDER REQUIRING INDOOR MASKING BY FEBRUARY 16, 2022
State Health Officer Order for Indoor Masking Also Set to Expire

(SANTA BARBARA, Calif.) – The Santa Barbara County Public Health Department will rescind Health Officer Order No. 2022 – 10 effective Wednesday, February 16, 2022, in alignment with the State’s Health Officer Order. Local guidance will defer to State guidance for use of face coverings. Universal masking will remain required in specified settings including, but not limited to, public transit, indoors in K-12 schools, childcare, shelters, healthcare settings, correctional facilities, and other care facilities. Only unvaccinated persons will be required to mask in all indoor public settings. Fully vaccinated individuals will be recommended to continue masking in public indoor settings. For full guidelines, visit the California Department of Public Health’s Guidance for the Use of Face Masks.

In closely analyzing recent data trends, along with the characteristics of the Omicron variant circulating, County Public Health officials have determined that aligning with the State on universal indoor masking is appropriate. While the Omicron variant has proved to be more transmissible than previous variants, it has also resulted in shorter periods of illness, fewer hospitalizations, and a lower death count for fully vaccinated community members.

“Our community has endured through 23 months of the COVID-19 pandemic and we have learned how best to protect ourselves,” shared County Public Health Director Van Do-Reynoso. “Vaccination, including receiving a booster, and testing will continue to diminish the spread of this virus, especially as we continue to move past the surge caused by the Omicron variant.”

Although masking requirements for indoor public settings are being rescinded, community members are highly encouraged to consider their personal risk in the months ahead as the virus continues to circulate, even at lower levels. A layered approach to protecting yourself and others is best. Consider masking in crowded areas where vaccination status is unknown. If you are sick, stay home for the duration of your illness and get tested if you have COVID-19 symptoms. If you are immunocompromised or care for someone that is, weigh your risk in attending large gatherings. Ensure indoor gatherings are well ventilated. Stay informed of case rates as you travel to other areas and take appropriate measures.

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“We are calling upon our community to act in the best interest of themselves and their neighbors,” said Dr. Henning Ansorg, County Health Officer. “We are now on the downslope of the recent surge as evidenced by our lowering case rate and test positivity along with stable hospitalizations. We have considered how the dominant variant circulates and what effects it has, and have determined we are in a place to be able to lift the universal indoor masking requirement.”

The risk for severe illness remains high among those that are unvaccinated in our community. From available local data, persons who are unvaccinated are 5.7 times more likely to contract COVID-19, 3.4 times more likely to be hospitalized for severe illness, and 8.1 times more likely to die than persons that are up-to-date with their COVID-19 vaccines.

Opportunities for first, second, and booster doses remain broadly available countywide. Visit https://publichealthsbc.org/vaccine/ to find a location near you today.

Business owners and local employers should continue referencing Cal/OSHA COVID-19 Guidance and Resources for their industry.

For more information about the COVID-19 response in Santa Barbara county, including testing sites, isolation and quarantine guidance, and data, visit https://publichealthsbc.org.

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Stay Connected:
County Public Health: www.PublicHealthSBC.org, Twitter and Facebook
County of Santa Barbara: www.CountyofSB.org, Twitter, Facebook
2-1-1 Call Center: Dial 211 if calling from within the county; or call (800) 400-1572 if calling from outside the area.
Community Wellness Team Information and Referral Line: (805) 364-2750