

Four year old dies from COVID-19 in Texas as cases in children skyrocket across the US

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A four-year-old child died of COVID-19 last Tuesday in Texas just four hours after exhibiting symptoms, in a tragic example of the expanding impact of the pandemic on children across the United States. Kali Cook of Barclif, Texas, began showing symptoms of COVID-19 around 2 a.m. and by 7 a.m. that same morning she had passed away in her sleep.

Kali's mother was unvaccinated and had tested positive for COVID-19 the day before. "I was one of the people that was anti, I was against it," she told *Daily News*. "Now, I wish I never was."

The sudden death of Kali Cook is a rare occurrence, but it is by no means an isolated incident. COVID-19 cases among children are exploding across the country just weeks after the reopening of schools, and the number of child deaths continues to rise.

Florida recorded 2,448 deaths last week, including four children under the age of 16. For the past three weeks children have made up one-third of new cases in Florida despite making up just 22 percent of the population. In just the past six weeks the total number of COVID-related child deaths in the state has doubled.

In response to the rise of pediatric cases, Tampa General Hospital released a video of pediatric doctors and nurses encouraging more people to get vaccinated.

"The delta variant really kind of changed the game for us, because we weren't seeing that many children — now we're starting to see them in the ICU," said Janet Elozory, pediatric ICU nurse manager at Tampa General.

The situation is the same across the country. According to data from the American Academy of Pediatrics, children now account for more than a quarter of weekly infections nationwide. During the week ending September 2, nearly 252,000 children tested positive for COVID-19. Between August 5 and

September 2 nearly 750,000 children tested positive as the pace of infection continues to climb.

In Colorado, 2,661 children tested positive in the last week of August alone, up from 347 cases a week in mid-July. At the current growth rate of infection, child cases will continue to double every week. If this pace continues, it will take less than two months to infect all of Colorado's 860,000 school-age children.

This rapid rise in cases is translating to an increase in child hospitalizations. During the week of August 22, 71 children aged 6 to 17 were hospitalized in Colorado, up from 40 during the prior week.

The connection between the rapid rise in cases and hospitalizations to school reopenings is apparent. Dr. Kevin Carney, associate chief medical officer at Children's Hospital Colorado, told the *Fort Morgan Post*, "The state has seen a significant increase in the number of pediatric patients infected with COVID-19. It's not surprising, given that within the last few weeks, kids have gone back to school."

Similar thoughts were expressed by Dr. Bryan Kornreich, a pediatrician from Frederick County in Virginia. Kornreich explained to WUSA9 that there has been a surge in pediatric COVID infections since schools opened, and that, "I'm worried we're just going to run out of COVID tests, because now the number of tests we're going through a day, it can't be sustained... and the manufacturer can't keep up with the demand."

Child cases are even worse in South Carolina, where more than 4,000 students and 398 staff tested positive during the first week of September. Young people aged 11 to 20 make up the largest group of those infected at 23 percent of cases, followed in second by children under the age of 11 constituting 15 percent of cases.

The rise in cases in the state resulted in the deaths of

two students in early September. A 9 year old and a 15 year old both died of COVID-19 on September 1 in Aiken County, according to the Associated Press.

The effect on children is not felt through infection alone, though. Tens of thousands of children across the country have lost one or both parents or another primary caregiver from COVID-19 during the pandemic. Just last week, a Michigan couple with seven children both died within one day of each other.

Troy and Charletta Green had been married for 22 years. Prior to a planned trip to Florida in August, Troy fell ill and decided to stay behind while his wife and children traveled to Orlando. Shortly after arriving Charletta fell ill as well. Both suffered from respiratory issues, with Troy placed on a ventilator on August 23 and Charletta on August 26.

The couple began to recover but Charletta developed a serious blood clot and passed on September 9. After learning of the death of his wife, Troy suffered a heart attack and died the next morning. As a result of the continued spread of COVID-19, which has been allowed to persist through the bipartisan policy of “herd immunity,” the children of Troy and Charletta Green, aged 10 to 23, tragically lost both of their parents.

Every day hundreds more children around the world are added to the list of those who have lost a parent to COVID-19. Research by the *Lancet* estimates that around 1.1 million children have lost at least one primary caregiver globally. Of that number, 114,000 children are from the United States. Given the gaps in reporting on deaths and cases around the world, the true figure is likely even higher.

The continued threat to the health and lives of children and their parents is a social crime of immense proportions. The persistence of the pandemic and the emergence of ever more contagious and dangerous variants is the product of the insatiable greed of the ruling class, which demands that children return to school so that parents may return to work generating profits for the wealthy.

There is no scientific basis for the policy of herd immunity or for the drive to reopen schools and workplaces. At an online forum last month hosted by the *World Socialist Web Site*, leading epidemiologists from around the world articulated a realistic and achievable program for ending the pandemic and eradicating COVID-19 in a matter of weeks.

Such a program is necessary in order to end the continued suffering of children, parents and educators who are being forced back to work and school amidst a rapid acceleration of the pandemic. Schools and nonessential workplaces must be shut down, full income support must be provided to those who cannot work and massive investment must be made in health care and virtual education.

We encourage all educators, parents and staff opposed to the dangerous reopening of schools to join in the movement to build Rank-and-File Safety Committees and organize the working class against the ruling class policy of social murder.



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