

A record 26 children died from COVID-19 in the US last week

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A record 26 children died from COVID-19 across the United States last week, according to the latest data from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) released Monday. More than a third of all US child deaths from COVID-19, or 234 of the 584 total reported deaths, have taken place in the past three months, directly coinciding with the mass surge in cases among children due to the reopening of schools.

Reported deaths often lag behind infections and are a stark indicator of the ongoing devastating impacts of the pandemic on children and families. In the past three months since schools began reopening for the fall semester, over 2.1 million children were officially infected with COVID-19. Despite a slight decrease in infections this past week by 12,800 cases, mass infection continues among children, with over 100,000 weekly cases reported for the past 11 weeks straight.

The AAP report reveals deeply alarming levels of infection and death among children, yet there are still significant limitations of the data presented. Texas, Alabama and Nebraska have halted their reporting of child COVID-19 cases, while Michigan, Montana, New York (excluding New York City), Rhode Island, Utah and West Virginia do not report the age distribution of deaths and are thus excluded from the AAP cumulative death toll. Additionally, only 24 states including New York City report pediatric hospitalization data.

Furthermore, nowhere in the US does there exist robust testing of symptomatic and asymptomatic cases among youth or real contact tracing measures to identify cases and the breadth of community spread. The entire AAP report must be scrutinized as only a distorted image of the dark reality of the impacts of COVID-19 on children.

The latest AAP data makes clear that both the Republicans and Democrats bear responsibility for the social crime being committed against young people across the US. The majority of child deaths in the latest AAP report, or 14 out of 26, occurred in Democrat-led states, while the Western and Northeastern regions of the US, comprised mostly of Democrat-led states, have seen the largest increases in

pediatric COVID-19 infections.

Both political parties are pursuing policies of “herd immunity,” or letting the virus rip through society, despite the posturing of Democrats and their backers in the trade unions that limited mitigation measures will stop the spread of the virus. The mainstream media is facilitating these policies by downplaying the severity of COVID-19 among children and the broader population, while pushing the narrative that the virus will inevitably become endemic.

In an effort to downplay the deadly impacts of COVID-19 on children, there has been a full media blackout regarding the record number of child deaths this week and the ongoing mass infections among young people. The deaths of a child between the ages of zero and 17 in Kansas and a school-aged child in Minnesota are the only instances of minimal coverage in the major state news outlets of the 26 child deaths that took place last week. Notably, neither the six child deaths in Texas nor the three child deaths in Indiana have yet to receive any media coverage.

Instead, news of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) emergency authorization of the Pfizer vaccine for children ages 5-11 has dominated headlines. At the end of Monday night’s NBC Nightly News report segment on the anticipated roll-out of the vaccine, there was a 20-second mention of the latest AAP report, which was grotesquely characterized as “another week of good news.”

Reporter Stephanie Gotz stated, “Yes it is [good news] Lester, seven weeks in a row of cases going down. The peak was over 250,000, and last week it was less than half that, but the Academy says the number is still too high.” No mention was made of the record number of child deaths from COVID-19 or the fact that cases among children this week are still well within range of last year’s deadly winter surge.

While it is vital to vaccinate children, the reality is that the vaccine is being pushed in order to maintain the deadly and dangerous reopening policies currently underway. Continued mass infection and deaths of children will be further swept under the rug. Under the present timeline, the vaccine rollout

will take another 10 days to begin and it will be over a month before any child under 12 is fully protected from severe infection. Furthermore, less than half of all youth ages 13-17 have been fully vaccinated and less than one-third of parents with children 5-11 say their child will get vaccinated right away once eligible.

While no corporate news outlet consistently reports on the real conditions in schools and workplaces during the pandemic, the *World Socialist Web Site* has made it a priority to expose the dire impacts of the pandemic on workers and youth and to share the real science behind COVID-19 and what is needed to end the pandemic.

On Sunday, October 24, the WSWS hosted a webinar titled, “How to end the pandemic,” which brought together some of the foremost scientists on the pandemic with workers who have led the struggle to expose unsafe conditions in schools and workplaces. Many of the panelists spoke directly to the impacts of COVID-19 on children and the reopening of schools.

During the webinar, British parent Lisa Diaz, who has initiated a series of global strikes against the unsafe reopening of schools, described the catastrophic conditions facing youth under the Johnson administration’s “herd immunity” policies. Throughout the UK, up to 20,000 children are now infected with COVID-19 each day and a total of 98 children have died from the virus.

Lisa noted that at her son’s high school, it took less than six weeks for nearly 30 percent of the student population to be infected. She described the complete lack of mitigation measures in UK schools, including no social distancing, no mask mandates, no isolation of close contacts, and poor ventilation.

Dr. Deepti Gurdasani, a public health researcher at the Queen Mary University in London and a mother herself, addressed Lisa’s concerns and gave a report on Long COVID and the impacts of the pandemic on children. Characterizing the Johnson administration’s school reopening policy as “frankly criminal,” she added, “in all respects, our government has completely failed to protect our children, and the impact of that has not only been mass infection of children but very high rates of Long COVID.”

Dr. Gurdasani revealed that there has been a recent uptick in Long COVID cases among children in the UK, with over 50,000 now living with long term effects, of whom 11,000 have had symptoms for more than one year.

Donna, a teacher in the US, described the horrendous impacts of the “herd immunity” policies on educators in schools in the US South, noting, “No one seemed to care that teachers were on the front lines facing a threat that might very well kill us and our families.”

Commenting on the Fall reopening of schools in her

district, she said, “Six close fully-vaccinated mask-wearing colleagues of mine became sick with COVID in September. While none of them were hospitalized, all of them continue to suffer fatigue, breathing problems and brain fog. They returned from sick leave tired and coughing, only to have to cover classes for colleagues who became sick with COVID in their turn because there is a shortage of substitute teachers.”

Dr. Howard Ehrman, a retired family medicine physician and longtime social activist in Chicago, focused his remarks on the catastrophic school reopening policies that began under Trump and have deepened under Biden. Providing figures on infections and deaths among children and educators, he stated, “Capitalism made a decision in the beginning—it has not changed under the Biden administration, and in fact it has gotten worse in many ways—to enable the economy to force people back to work, and [youth] to learn in unsafe conditions.”

Over the course of the event, each scientist made clear that only through a strategy aimed at the global elimination strategy will humanity put an end to the pandemic. In his summation of the meeting, WSWS International Editorial Board Chairman David North stressed that the fight to end the pandemic must be taken up by the international working class armed with the scientific knowledge of COVID-19 and how it spreads.

A critical element of a globally coordinated elimination strategy is to close schools and provide high quality remote learning for all students, in addition to closing nonessential businesses while providing financial assistance to workers. This must be combined with the deployment of all necessary public health measures, including mass testing, contact tracing, the isolation of infected patients, masking, a globally-coordinated vaccination program, and more, to progressively eliminate the virus in ever-broader geographic areas until the whole planet is safe from further needless infections and deaths from COVID-19.



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