

Rise in US child COVID-19 cases foreshadows coming winter surge

Chase Lawrence
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Across the globe, COVID-19 cases are continuing to rise as a result of the further relaxing of mitigation measures and the approach of winter in the Northern Hemisphere. In the US, the 14-day average in cases is now trending upwards after a brief decline. This includes children who have experienced the devastating impact from COVID-19 in 2021 due to the reopening of schools. The weekly American Association of Pediatrics (AAP) report released Monday found that for the first week since September 2 there was an increase in recorded childhood cases, as another 107,350 children officially tested positive for COVID-19, roughly 24 percent of all US cases recorded in the last week.

The weekly child death toll continues to hover over 15 deaths per week. Mortality data in the AAP report shows 17 reported deaths this week in the following US states and territories: California (1), Colorado (1), Guam (1), Maryland (1), South Carolina (1), Tennessee (1), Texas (8), Virginia (1) and Washington (2). An online search for local or national news reports on these tragic deaths produces zero results.

For 13 straight weeks, the AAP has reported over 100,000 weekly new cases in children. Fourteen states reported that more than 12 out of every 100 children had contracted COVID-19, meaning that in a class of 25 children, three can be expected to have been infected with the virus. Significantly, a look at the regional data in the AAP report shows the biggest jump in infection rates has been seen in the West, Northeast and Midwest regions while the South has continued to decline.

Recent data from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) mimics this regional trend, with the centers of viral transmission switching from the South and Southeast regions on August 12 to the West and Northwest as of November 7. On Sunday, a tweet by Eric Topol, cardiologist and professor of molecular medicine in Southern California, went viral pointing out that the

maps are “almost opposites.”

The AAP data offers only a glimpse into the monumental catastrophe that has been inflicted on children, with actual cases, hospitalizations and deaths far higher than the official figures.

For instance, Texas reports age distribution of cases for only 3 percent of the population on its state COVID-19 dashboard, resulting in a significant undercount of child cases on the AAP report. However, the state does report positive COVID-19 cases found among children in schools and data from the Texas Department of State Health Services which shows that at least 359,985 cases have been reported among children in schools since the start of the pandemic. Given the overall lack of testing in Texas schools, cases are undoubtedly much higher.

As cases have accelerated, safety measures such as mask wearing and testing are being repudiated by both Democratic and Republican state governments well before the majority of children are vaccinated. In Florida, Democrats capitulated to the state’s fascistic Republican Governor Ron DeSantis by lifting mask mandates in the state’s three largest school districts—Orange County, Broward County and Miami-Dade County—which serve a combined roughly 830,000 students.

In New York City, the largest school district in the US with roughly 1.1 million students, recently elected Democratic Mayor Eric Adams has promised to rescind mask mandates in city public schools once he becomes mayor in January. Los Angeles Unified School District, the second largest school district with over 600,000 students, plans to end their testing program for students by the end of the year.

According to a school opening tracker by Burbio, 68 percent of the top 500 school districts have mask policies in place. However, a recent investigative report by NBC News noted that based on Burbio’s data, more than a dozen of the 200 largest school districts in the country

lifted mask mandates in recent weeks.

With the winter months swiftly approaching and another deadly surge clearly on the horizon, plans by major school districts to lift all restrictions well before most children are vaccinated will knowingly result in the mass infection, long-term illness and deaths of countless children.

Over the course of the pandemic, an average of 1,200 deaths has occurred every day. The ruling class has sought to ignore and normalize death, with horrific consequences. The Astroworld festival disaster, where eight people were crushed to death and hundreds injured in a crowd surge at a concert in Houston, Texas, typifies this process. Amid the raging pandemic, festival grounds were allowed to be severely overcrowded with no intervention from the police or the operators of the festival grounds. The whole arrangement echoes the ruling class policy of mass death: a mass reopening so that business can profit, without any regard for human life. The same state where this tragedy took place has experienced a horrific 109 child deaths from COVID-19, by far the highest number of any state.

In the face of escalating cases and mass deaths, the US has rescinded all restrictions on international flights and land travel that had been in place for 20 months, in advance of a surge in expected travel to the country. Delta Airlines is expecting a 50 percent increase in inbound flights in the coming weeks.

In countries across the world, remaining safety measures are being repudiated, with the disastrous model of the United States being used as an example elsewhere. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), Europe has experienced a more than 55 percent increase in cases over the past month, with record number of cases in Russia and Germany. Despite this catastrophic surge, Germany has declared that the pandemic is over and that most remaining protective measures will be eliminated on November 25. In Eastern Europe, cases are surging in Slovenia, Estonia and Georgia.

The WHO has warned of 500,000 new COVID-19 deaths in Europe and the former Soviet republics by February, beyond the 1.4 million who have already died. Last week, WHO Director for Europe Hans Kluge urged health authorities to act immediately to halt the spread of the virus and prevent another deadly winter, stating, “We must change our tactics from reacting to surges of COVID-19 to preventing them from happening in the first place.”

Countries in Asia, including Singapore and Vietnam, have abandoned their elimination strategy and

experienced a surge in cases. In Japan, as cases have declined but not reached zero, government officials are loosening restrictions, with quarantine for business travel being reduced from 10 days to three.

The looming winter surge threatens to bring mass death and infections the world over, yet it is entirely preventable. Efforts being made by governments to lift any remaining mitigation measures accelerate the very real possibility for more virulent and vaccine-resistant variants to develop and spread.

As was explained in the October 24 webinar held by the *World Socialist Web Site* and International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) “How to end the pandemic,” the only way to stop the pandemic is through a global elimination strategy. This requires the temporary closure of schools and nonessential businesses for a period of a few months, coupled with a massive investment in testing, quarantining, and contact tracing, a globally coordinated mass vaccination program, and full economic support to families and employees of businesses closed for health reasons.

This program must be taken up by the working class, the only social force able to implement the necessary health measures which are objectively in their interests, in opposition to the financial elite who have seen their stock values increase to obscene levels as millions have perished from COVID-19. The global ruling elite is diametrically opposed to any comprehensive program aimed at eliminating COVID-19 as it impinges on their profits and threatens a collapse of the increasingly fragile stock market.

A program to end the pandemic requires mass education of the population, to arm the working class with the real science of how the virus spreads and a revolutionary socialist perspective to explain the underlying economic forces that are dictating policies worldwide.



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