

As over 10 children die from COVID-19 each day, all US states drop mask mandates in schools

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Despite the thoroughly antiscientific alteration to mask guidelines by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the aggressive campaign by state and health authorities across the US to declare the pandemic over, the latest data on pediatric infections, hospitalizations and deaths betray an entirely different reality.

The CDC evidently did not consult its own data on the record child deaths that have occurred, and continue to occur, during the surge of the Omicron variant of SARS-CoV-2, as consequences of the staggering level of infections and hospitalizations among children since early January.

Over the last month alone, from January 31 to February 27, the CDC Data Tracker Demographics section has added 212 pediatric deaths, a rate of 7.5 children per day. Nearly 70 percent of these, 148, occurred in the last 13 days, a rate of over 11 per day. Finally, 84 were added across the five days from February 23-27, a staggering rate of nearly 17 per day.

As of Sunday, the most recent update shows that 1,430 children have been killed by COVID-19 in the US since the start of the pandemic. Age data has been released for only 807,877 deaths, meaning the ages for 137,811 deaths, using the CDC's current death toll of 945,688, have not yet been processed.

While there are no dates attached to these figures, a troubling limitation in itself, the majority have been added over the past few months. Health care expert Gregory Travis has tracked this data set and found that over half of all child deaths have been added since November 2021, during the Delta and Omicron waves fueled largely by the full reopening of schools.

The latest American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) report for the week ending February 24, which uses different data sources from the CDC, recorded another 20 child deaths in 14 states across every region of the country. The AAP cumulative child death toll stands at 891, a vast undercount compared to the CDC's demographics data. Indicative of the limitations, the report is missing five states which have never publicized age mortality data, four states which no longer publicize this information, and Texas, which now only releases the data once per month.

Of the states with confirmed child deaths last week, Louisiana, Mississippi and California each added three pediatric deaths. These are the highest single week increases in these states since at least mid-November.

The AAP report also shows another 126,774 child infections, the 29th straight week of over 100,000 child infections. An additional 474 children were hospitalized last week, a significant undercount because only 25 states plus New York City provide age information for hospitalizations.

Just as the CDC's reduction in quarantine and isolation guidelines was a clear capitulation to lobbying by Delta Airlines, among other major corporations, the latest change follows a campaign by the White House and state authorities which demanded the agency provide justification for removing mask mandates.

With the seeming flip of a switch, most of the country transitioned from living in high-risk to low- or medium-risk areas overnight, while 70 percent of the population is now encouraged to stop wearing masks.

Again betraying her role as a shill for the Democratic Party and an enemy of teachers, American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten hailed the new guidelines in a press release, writing, "We welcome these long-needed new metrics for a safe off-ramp from universal masking. The CDC's guidance is informed by science, not politics, and sets us on a path to a new normal in schools and other public places."

The change also comes on the eve of Biden's first State of the Union address tonight, which he will deliver to a "mask optional" audience. He will seek to chloroform the public about the dangers of the ongoing pandemic, as over 2,000 people continue to die from COVID-19 each day in the US.

States have pounced upon the CDC's new guidelines. The last three states with statewide mask mandates in schools—California, Oregon and Washington—announced Monday that they will drop them earlier than previously stated. Clearly working in tandem, the change will go into effect on March 11 in each state.

Delaware's school mask mandate ended today, a month

earlier than Democratic Governor John Carney initially proposed, with state officials citing the CDC's new guidelines. Illinois also ended its school mask mandate on Monday, and Maryland's was ditched last Friday.

Also citing the CDC, New York's Democratic Governor Kathy Hochul announced that the state's school mask mandate will end Wednesday, one week earlier than expected. New York City Mayor Eric Adams is prepared to end the city's school mask mandate on March 7, as well as the Key2NYC vaccine requirement for restaurants, gyms and theaters.

Educators and parents widely denounced Adams on Twitter.

One teacher wrote, "I love my work and my students but I cannot risk the lives of my unborn twins by being in a 43% vaccinated environment with no ventilation and no masking. And what about high risk students & families? Anti-safety activists should not get the final say for the rest of us."

Another said, "There is no mechanism to report and count positive home rapid tests, even as more and more people have begun using them - including @NYCSchools whenever students are exposed and right now as they return. And no school vaccination requirement. Terrible idea to drop it all now."

Statements made by Adams last week underscore the true priority of the entire political structure in the United States, which demands the full reopening of schools and businesses in order to secure corporate profits. *Politico* quoted Adams saying at a press conference, "The best thing we can do to deal with Covid is get back to work... New Yorkers did their job: vaccinated, boosters, taking testing. Now I need them to do one more job: go back to their job."

In another press conference, he said, "I'm hearing people saying, 'Hey Eric, you're not focused on Covid.' I'm like, 'What are you saying?' We have masterfully kept our schools open. Brought down rates inside our schools so that parents can go to work."

This is a blatant revision of history. In fact, epidemiologist Isaac Michaels noted that between January 3-14 alone, there were 85,492 confirmed cases among students in New York City's K-12 schools, an unprecedented increase above 2020-2021.

The dropping of school mask mandates is not based on popular support. A recent UC Berkeley poll of registered voters in California found that 65 percent support mask requirements and 64 percent support vaccine requirements in K-12 schools. In addition, a nationwide CBS-YouGov poll from mid-February found that 56 percent of respondents supported mask mandates in all indoor settings.

The scrapping of the last remaining measures that reduce the spread of COVID-19 comes as the BA.2 Omicron subvariant has been identified in every US state and threatens to prolong the current wave, if not unleash a new surge in itself. The variant is known to be more transmissible and potentially more virulent than the BA.1 Omicron variant.

Without masks, children have effectively no protections against COVID-19 in schools or public places. Vaccination rates remain very low among children. Ages 0 to 4 remain ineligible for vaccination, while only 25.6 percent of 5-to-11-year-olds and 57.5 percent of 12-to-17-year-olds have received two shots.

According to the Coronavirus in Kids Project, only 11.5 percent of children ages 12-17 are "optimally" vaccinated, meaning those whose primary series was recently completed and are not overdue for a booster.

On Monday, researchers from New York's Department of Health released a preprint study showing a major drop in the Pfizer vaccine's efficacy among 5-to-11-year-olds compared to the 12-17 age group. Pfizer's is the only approved COVID-19 vaccine for 5-to-11-year-olds, and they receive one-third the dose of the older group.

According to their data, between December 13, 2021 and January 30, 2022, vaccine efficacy (VE) against infection declined from 66 to 55 percent for 12-to-17-year-olds and dropped from 68 to 12 percent for 5-to-11-year-olds.

Efficacy against hospitalization also declined dramatically between the two groups. Over the same time period, VE against hospitalization declined from 85 percent to 73 percent among 12-to-17-year-olds, and from 100 percent to 48 percent among 5-to-11-year-olds.

Educators, parents and students must recognize the enormous dangers posed by the latest decisions of the White House, the CDC and local authorities. Like his predecessor Trump, Biden has sought to accustom the population to mass death, in preparation not only for continuing pandemic fatalities, but also for the deaths that will inevitably occur as a result of his administration's reckless provocation of war with Russia.

The past year has proven that the Democratic Party is wholly immune to pressure from the population and is indifferent to the suffering and deaths of millions. The CDC itself has demonstrated that its principal job is to bolster the political establishment and corporate elite, rather than protect human life.

The working class must act now to develop an international mass movement that will fight for the global elimination of COVID-19 and against the threat of war.



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