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TOMÁS J. ARAGÓN, M.D., Dr.P.H.
State Public Health Officer & Director

State of California—Health and
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GAVIN NEWSOM
Governor

California Department of Public Health

August 11, 2021

TO: All Californians

SUBJECT: Vaccine Verification for Workers in Schools

State Public Health Officer Order of August 11, 2021

The COVID-19 pandemic remains a significant challenge in California. COVID-19 vaccines are effective in reducing infection, serious disease, hospitalization, and death. At present, 63% of Californians 12 years of age and older are fully vaccinated with an additional 10% partially vaccinated. Children under the age of 12 are not currently eligible for any authorized vaccines.

California is currently experiencing the fastest increase in COVID-19 cases during the entire pandemic with 22.7 new cases per 100,000 people per day, with case rates increasing tenfold since early June. The Delta variant, which is two times more contagious than the original virus, is currently the most common variant causing new infections in California.

Unvaccinated persons are more likely to get infected and spread the virus, which is transmitted through the air. Most current hospitalizations and deaths are among unvaccinated adults. Almost all K-6th graders are unvaccinated and will not be eligible for vaccines at the outset of the 2021-22 school year. Additionally, although some 7-12th grade students will be fully vaccinated by the start of the school year, many will not. As of August 10, 2021, less than 41% of Californians 12 to 17 years old were fully vaccinated.

California is committed to safe, full, in-person learning for all in K-12 schools, following strong public health science. For example, California has implemented a universal masking requirement in all K-12 schools, as well as recommendations around testing strategies for K-12 schools, to support the successful return to full in-person instruction at the outset of the school year, as well as minimizing missed school days.

Vaccination against COVID-19 is the most effective means of preventing infection with the COVID-19 virus, and subsequent transmission and outbreaks. Current CDPH K-12 guidance strongly recommends vaccination for all eligible individuals, thereby reducing COVID-19 rates throughout the community, including in schools, and creating a wrap-around safety layer for unvaccinated students. This Order, consistent with this recommendation, requires verification of vaccination status among eligible K-12 school workers, and establishes diagnostic screening testing of unvaccinated workers to minimize the risk that they will transmit while on K-12 school campuses, where a majority of students are not vaccinated and younger students are not yet eligible for vaccines.

Schools may use funds received from multiple sources to address costs associated with employee vaccination verification and COVID-19 diagnostic screening testing, including Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER) I, II, and III; Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund (GEER) I and II; and In-Person Instruction Grants (AB 86). Additionally, the California Department of Public Health provides access to subsidized COVID-19 testing for schools through specified partners.

For these reasons, in order to prevent the further spread of COVID-19 in K-12 schools, the following temporary and limited public health measures are necessary at this time.

I, as State Public Health Officer of the State of California, order:

I. This Order applies to the following facilities: public and private schools serving students in transitional kindergarten through grade 12, inclusive, except that it does not apply to home schools. Further, it does not apply to child care or to higher education.

II. All schools identified in this Order must verify vaccine status of all workers.

A. Pursuant to the [CDPH Guidance for Vaccine Records Guidelines & Standards](#), only the following modes may be used as proof of vaccination:

1. COVID-19 Vaccination Record Card (issued by the Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control & Prevention or WHO Yellow Card) which includes name of person vaccinated, type of vaccine provided and date last dose administered); OR
2. a photo of a Vaccination Record Card as a separate document; OR
3. a photo of the client's Vaccination Record Card stored on a phone or electronic device; OR
4. documentation of COVID-19 vaccination from a health care provider; OR
5. digital record that includes a QR code that when scanned by a SMART Health Card reader displays to the reader client name, date of birth, vaccine dates and vaccine type; OR
6. documentation of vaccination from other contracted employers who follow these vaccination records guidelines and standards.

In the absence of knowledge to the contrary, a school may accept the documentation presented as valid.

B. Schools must have a plan in place for tracking verified worker vaccination status. Records of vaccination verification must be made available, upon request, to the local health jurisdiction for purposes of case investigation.

C. Workers who are not fully vaccinated, or for whom vaccine status is unknown or documentation is not provided, must be considered unvaccinated.

III. Testing requirements:

A. Asymptomatic unvaccinated or incompletely vaccinated workers are required to undergo diagnostic screening testing.

B. Workers may be tested with either antigen or molecular tests to satisfy this requirement, but unvaccinated or incompletely vaccinated workers must be tested at least once weekly with either PCR testing or antigen testing. Any PCR (molecular) or antigen test used must either have Emergency Use Authorization by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration or be operating per the Laboratory Developed Test requirements by the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

C. Unvaccinated or incompletely vaccinated workers must also observe all other infection control requirements, and are not exempted from the testing requirement even if they have a medical contraindication to vaccination, since they are still potentially able to spread the illness. Previous history of COVID-19 from which the individual recovered more than 90 days earlier, or a previous positive antibody test for COVID-19, do not waive this requirement for testing.

D. Schools with workers required to undergo workplace diagnostic screening testing should have a plan in place for tracking test results and conducting workplace contact tracing, and must report results to local public health departments. There are IT platforms available that can facilitate these processes for schools.

IV. Definitions: For purposes of this Order, the following definitions apply:

A. "Fully Vaccinated" means individuals who are considered fully vaccinated for COVID-19: two weeks or more after they have received the second dose in a 2-dose series (Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna or vaccine authorized by the World Health Organization), or two weeks or more after they have received a

single-dose vaccine (Johnson and Johnson [J&J]/Janssen). COVID-19 vaccines that are currently authorized for emergency use:

1. By the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) , are listed at the [FDA COVID-19 Vaccines webpage](#)
2. By the World Health Organization (WHO), are listed at [WHO COVID-19 Vaccines webpage](#)

B. "Incompletely vaccinated" means persons who have received at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine but do not meet the definition of fully vaccinated.

C. "Transitional Kindergarten" means the first year of a two-year kindergarten program that uses a modified kindergarten curriculum that is age and developmentally appropriate.

D. "Unvaccinated" means persons who have not received any doses of COVID-19 vaccine or whose status is unknown.

E. "WHO Yellow Card" refers to the original World Health Organization International Certificate of Vaccination or Prophylaxis issued to the individual following administration of the COVID-19 vaccine in a foreign country.

F. "Worker" refers to all paid and unpaid adults serving in the school settings described in Section I. Workers include, but are not limited to, certificated and classified staff, analogous staff working in private school settings, and volunteers who are on-site at a school campus supporting school functions.

V. The Terms of this Order supersede any conflicting terms in any other CDPH orders, directives, or guidance.

VI. Except to the extent this Order provides otherwise, all other terms in my [Order of June 11, 2021](#) remain in effect and shall continue to apply statewide.

VII. This Order shall take effect on August 12, 2021, at 12:01 am. Facilities must be in full compliance with the Order by October 15, 2021.

VIII. This Order is issued pursuant to Health and Safety Code sections 120125, 120140, 120175, 120195 and 131080 and other applicable law.

 Tomás Aragón Signature

Tomás J. Aragón, MD, DrPH

Director and State Public Health Officer

California Department of Public Health

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