



**ORDER OF THE HEALTH OFFICER OF THE COUNTY OF CONTRA COSTA
RESCINDING ORDER MANDATING THE WEARING OF FACE COVERINGS IN
PUBLIC INDOOR SPACES**

ORDER NO. HO-COVID19-66

DATE OF ORDER: FEBRUARY 9, 2022

Summary of the Order

This Order of the Health Officer rescinds Health Officer Order No. HO-COVID19-51, as amended, which mandated the wearing of face coverings in indoor public settings in Contra Costa County (“County”) to slow the spread of the virus that causes Coronavirus Disease 2019 (“COVID-19”), effective at 12:01 a.m. on February 16, 2022.

UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF CALIFORNIA HEALTH AND SAFETY CODE SECTIONS 101040 and 120175, THE HEALTH OFFICER OF THE COUNTY OF CONTRA COSTA (“HEALTH OFFICER”) ORDERS:

1. **Basis of Order.** On August 2, 2021, the Health Officer issued an order, No. HO-COVID19-51 (the “Face Covering Order”) that required all persons to wear face coverings while inside indoor public settings located in the County. Over the months that followed, the Face Covering Order was amended by subsequent orders, including Health Officer orders No. HO-COVID19-52 and No. HO-COVID19-56, which carved out limited exceptions for participation in religious activities, performers and public speakers, respectively. The Face Covering Order, Health Officer orders Nos. HO-COVID19-52 and HO-COVID19-56, and Section 2.c. of Health Officer order No. HO-COVID19-63 (which declared HO-COVID-56 to be in full force and effect as of December 30, 2021), will hereafter be referred to collectively as the “Prior Orders.”

The Face Covering Order was issued in response to increasing numbers of people infected with the COVID-19 virus, including persons fully vaccinated against COVID-19, and increasing numbers of hospitalizations. At the time, the Delta variant was predominant, and evidence indicated that fully vaccinated people infected with this variant may have been transmitting the virus to other people, but fully vaccinated people were not required to wear face coverings. Both the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and the U.S.



Centers for Disease Control & Prevention were recommending that fully vaccinated people wear face coverings in public indoor settings in areas of substantial or high transmission. For these reasons, in order to slow the spread of this variant, the Health Officer issued the Face Covering Order.

Since the issuance of the Prior Orders, the Omicron variant of SARS-CoV-2 emerged and quickly became the dominant strain nationwide and in the County. The Omicron variant currently accounts for more than 99 percent of sequenced virus samples in the County. After it arrived here, case rates quickly spiked. The current wave began the week of December 13, 2021. That first week, the rolling seven-day average in the County was 16.7 new cases per 100,000 people, an increase of 69 percent from the rolling seven-day average of 9.9 per 100,000 people the previous week. The wave peaked on January 9, 2022, when the rolling seven-day average case rate had climbed to 249.2 cases per 100,000 people. Case rates have plummeted since the peak, falling to a seven-day average case rate of 35.7 cases per 100,000 people as of February 8, 2022.

Current COVID-19 vaccines, together with booster doses, continue to provide recipients with protection against severe illness, hospitalizations, and deaths. However, as a result of mutations of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, the Omicron variant is more transmissible than previous variants, including among people who have been fully vaccinated. While the vaccines have never prevented all infections of or transmissions from vaccinated people, circulation of the Omicron variant means that there will be even more transmissions and cases. This can be expected to occur everywhere Omicron is present, and is expected to occur in indoor public settings notwithstanding the wearing of face coverings, which can help to slow the spread of the virus but cannot prevent all transmission.

Compared with cases involving previous variants, however, the cases caused by the Omicron variant involve less severe disease on the average, which in turn means fewer per-case hospital admissions due to COVID-19 than have been seen in previous waves. At the peak of the current wave, there were 333 people in County hospitals with COVID-19, with 58 of those in intensive care units. Currently, there are 201 people hospitalized in the County with COVID-19, with 52 in intensive care. Roughly half of these patients have been hospitalized because of primary ailments other than COVID-19.

The County is currently shown as an area of high transmission in the COVID Data Tracker maintained by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. However, the County is also a high vaccination rate area. Of the approximately 1.15 million people who live in the County, as of February 8, 2022, 80.1 percent are fully vaccinated, and 87.4 percent have received at least one dose. Considering both vaccinated people and others who have recovered from natural infection, it is estimated that around 95 percent of County residents have some degree of protection against the virus.

In summary, the high rate of vaccination in the County, coupled with the decreased severity of symptoms caused by the Omicron variant, make the County well-positioned to handle high case rates and transmissions caused by this variant. It is expected that going forward, use of the health care system related to COVID-19 will stabilize as case numbers and



hospitalizations drop. The wearing of face coverings indoors continues to be recommended as a personal and community protection measure, in particular for the elderly, immunocompromised persons and other vulnerable individuals and their close contacts. But a local face covering mandate in public indoor spaces is no longer imperative.

The wearing of face coverings continues to be mandated by CDPH statewide in high-risk locations such as health care facilities, nursing homes, detention facilities, homeless shelters, K-12 schools and public transit facilities.

For the above reasons, I have determined that the Prior Orders are no longer necessary and should be rescinded.

2. **Prior Orders Rescinded.** The Prior Orders are hereby rescinded.
3. **Effective Date and Time.** This Order takes effect at 12:01 a.m. on February 16, 2022.
4. **Copies; Contact Information.** Copies of this Order shall promptly be: (1) made available at the Office of the Director of Contra Costa Health Services, 1220 Morello Avenue, Suite 200, Martinez, CA 94553; (2) posted on the Contra Costa Health Services website (<https://www.cchealth.org>); and (3) provided to any member of the public requesting a copy of this Order. Questions or comments regarding this Order may be directed to Contra Costa Health Services at (844) 729-8410.

IT IS SO ORDERED:



Ori Tzvieli, M.D.
Health Officer of the County of Contra Costa

Dated: February 09, 2022

