

“New CDC Guidelines in DC, MD, and VA”

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As the Delta variant of COVID-19 continues to spread, both federal and state governments are taking action to reduce its harmful effects. Federally, Joe Biden announced on July 29th, 2021 that all federal employees must either confirm that they are vaccinated or submit to frequent testing and adhere to social distancing rules. This announcement has a far-reaching effect, as the federal government employs more than 4 million people, with hundreds of thousands living in the DMV area. This requirement comes days after the CDC recommended that fully vaccinated people wear masks in public, indoor settings.

In the District of Columbia, Mayor Bowser has declared that masks will be required in indoor public settings in D.C. for people over the age of 2 as of July 31st, 2021, and has continued to encourage vaccinations. D.C. Public Schools will also require masks in the fall. The guidance issued by Mayor Bowser states indoor public settings include grocery stores, restaurants and bars (when not eating or drinking), places of worship, gyms, office buildings, common areas of apartment or condominium complexes, and indoor forms of public transportation. Although some news outlets have reported that the D.C. order requires all employees working in the District of Columbia to wear masks while working, the order actually appears to apply only to public areas of private office buildings and permits, but does not require, private workplaces not generally accessible to the public to implement similar requirements.

In Maryland, Prince George’s and Montgomery County are requiring masks among all students. While Montgomery County is doing so regardless of vaccination status, the CEO of Prince George Public Schools, Monica Goldon, expressed concern that the vaccination rate among eligible students was still too low to forgo a mask requirement. Maryland’s most recent guidance from May 19, 2021, that “private business and workplaces can implement policies requiring face coverings to be worn on their premises” and that “the business has the sole responsibility to uphold those policies.”

In Virginia, Governor Ralph Northam on July 29 tweeted a recommendation (but not a requirement) to wear masks indoors in public settings where there is an increased risk of COVID-19 transmission. Governor Northam provided no further elaboration. At the county level, starting July 30, the City of Alexandria is requiring visitors and employees to wear masks inside of city facilities, regardless of vaccination status. Arlington, Alexandria, Prince William Loudon, and Fairfax counties will also all start the school year with universally required masking while inside.

We will post further updates as they are available.