Local Health Officer Directive for Wearing Masks in Public Indoor Spaces
Thurston County

WHEREAS Washington state law, RCW 70.05.070(2) - (3), requires and empowers the Local Health Officer to take such action as is necessary to maintain health and to control and prevent the spread of any contagious or infectious diseases within the jurisdiction; and

WHEREAS Washington state regulation, WAC 246-100-036, requires the Local Health Officer, when necessary, to institute disease control measures as he, she, or they deem necessary based on his, her, or their professional judgment, current standards of practice, and the best available medical and scientific information;

WHEREAS COVID-19, a respiratory disease that can result in serious illness or death to vulnerable or at-risk populations, is caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, which is a new strain of coronavirus that had not been previously identified in humans and can easily spread from person to person primarily through respiratory droplets and aerosols; and

WHEREAS the currently available COVID-19 vaccinations are safe and effective at reducing the risk of severe illness and death from COVID-19; and

WHEREAS the Delta variant of the SARS-CoV-2 virus which causes COVID-19 is the dominant variant in Washington State, is significantly more contagious than other variants; and

WHEREAS the vast majority of COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations and deaths occur among unvaccinated persons --vaccination affords excellent protection against serious COVID-19 infections, although a small proportion of vaccinated persons can still become infected and transmit the disease; and

WHEREAS severely immunosuppressed individuals in the community have a reduced response to vaccine and remain vulnerable to severe disease due to COVID-19; and

WHEREAS an estimated 90,000 Thurston County residents are eligible for vaccine and have not yet initiated vaccination and an estimated 40,000 children under age 12 in Thurston County are not yet eligible for the vaccine; and

WHEREAS when COVID-19 spreads at a high rate among the unvaccinated, the risk of
being exposed is higher for everyone – vaccinated and unvaccinated – and more infections will occur, primarily among unvaccinated people; and

WHEREAS face masks reduce the emission of SARS-CoV-2 virus-laden droplets (“source control”) from infected persons and inhalation of these droplets by a wearer; and, community masking is recommended by Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to reduce the spread of SARS-CoV-2; and

WHEREAS the CDC recently issued guidance recommending fully vaccinated individuals should wear masks in indoor public spaces in areas of substantial or high transmission and that individuals who are not fully vaccinated should continue to wear masks in public indoor spaces; and

WHEREAS Thurston County has had a significant increase in COVID-19 cases in recent weeks and currently has a COVID-19 transmission rate of 272.5 cases per 100,000 population over 14 days and is classified by the CDC as having high transmission; and

WHEREAS 12,872 Thurston County residents have tested positive for COVID-19, 800 have been hospitalized and 102 have died due to complications of COVID-19; and

WHEREAS increases in COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations have placed a strain on hospital capacity in Thurston County; and

WHEREAS the University of Washington’s Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation’s most recent COVID-19 Results Briefing for Washington State on August 5, 2021 projects that if universal mask coverage (95%) is attained in the next week, there will be 1500 fewer cumulative excess deaths on December 1st in Washington state

NOW, THEREFORE, based upon the preceding, the Local Health Officer HEREBY FINDS that:

Use of face masks for everyone ≥5 years of age within indoor public spaces is reasonable and necessary in Thurston County to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission until the Thurston County Health Officer confirms that the COVID-19 risk to Thurston County residents is substantially reduced based on considerations that include but may not be limited to: COVID-19 disease rates declining to low levels of community transmission as defined by the CDC; COVID-19 hospitalizations and death rates stabilizing at low levels.

EFFECTIVE Friday, August 13, 2021, at 6:00 a.m., as the Local Health Officer I hereby direct as follows:

Everyone ≥5 years of age in Thurston County shall wear a face covering within indoor public spaces.

Children ages two, three, or four years old, while exempt from this official directive, are recommended to wear a face covering with the assistance and close supervision of an adult in accordance with the current Order of the Secretary of Health.
All persons in correctional facilities, homeless shelters, schools, childcare, public
transportation, and health care settings, including doctor’s offices, long-term care, and
hospitals, shall also wear a well-fitted mask in accord with state requirements already in
place.

This DIRECTIVE applies to all indoor spaces that are open to the public, including retail,
grocery stores, government buildings, and other businesses and places where members of the
public can enter freely; it does not apply to indoor non-public spaces, including businesses,
offices, and other places of employment with limited access. Employers should continue to
follow current guidance and requirements from the Washington State Department of Labor
and Industries on worker safety.

This DIRECTIVE does not apply to outdoor spaces. Please follow current Washington State
Department of Health guidance and directives on the use of masks outdoors.

I strongly urge all people in Thurston County to voluntarily comply with this DIRECTIVE,
and likewise direct all businesses that are open to the public, including grocery and other
retail establishments, government buildings, and other businesses and places where members
of the public can enter freely to continue implementing policies and practices to ensure that
their customers and employees wear face masks in order to protect the health of their
customers, workers, and the community.

This DIRECTIVE shall remain in effect until the Thurston County Health Officer confirms
that COVID-19 disease rates decline to low levels of transmission as defined by the CDC or
until this directive is otherwise rescinded.

Dimyana Abdelmalek, MD, MPH
Health Officer

August 12, 2021
Date