

Dept. of Health Services: Secretary-designee Karen Timberlake's statement on CDC's new indicators to Monitor COVID-19 community risk levels

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The Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) supports the [new Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) metrics](#) used to determine the risk level of COVID-19 in communities. Widespread access to vaccines and testing, available treatment options, and high levels of population immunity have combined to make a new approach to monitoring and preventing COVID-19 possible. Under the new COVID-19 Community Levels metrics, wearing a well-fitting mask in public indoor settings is recommended only when a particular community is experiencing "high" [COVID-19 Community Levels](#), unless you or someone you live with is at [high risk](#) for severe disease.

With this new guidance, universal masking in schools is recommended in areas with "high" COVID-19 Community Levels. People who are immunocompromised or have a high risk for severe disease are encouraged to talk with their health care provider about COVID-19 prevention strategies. These changes are intended to prevent COVID-19 from straining our health care systems while allowing communities, organizations, and individuals to make decisions based on their own unique circumstances. DHS urges Wisconsinites to respect settings where masks are still required, such as on public transportation and in health care settings.

"The availability of vaccines, boosters, testing, and effective treatments has moved us into a new phase of the COVID-19 pandemic," said DHS Secretary-designee

Karen Timberlake. “Thanks to these tools, we can more effectively prevent or reduce the risk of severe illness due to COVID-19. However, this does not mean the pandemic is over. COVID-19 will continue to spread in our communities, so we must be ready to do what we can to prevent it from overwhelming our hospitals and health care systems.”

View the entire [statement](#).