



Press release

Local Pediatricians Answer Common Questions About Reopening Schools

PASADENA, CA (August 12, 2020)

As pediatricians, our top priority is the health and safety of our children. As all schools in our chapter have been directed under the Governor’s order to start online this fall, we urge everyone to work together to decrease the community transmission of COVID-19 by wearing masks, physically distancing and avoiding large groups so that our elementary schools have a chance to re-open this academic year. We recognize that children need the education, nutrition, physical activity, and mental health benefits provided through the reopening of schools.

Current research suggests that the risk of COVID-19 transmission among groups of children is much lower than the adult population. The negative effects of missing in-person educational time as children experience prolonged periods of isolation and lack of instruction, however, is clear. Special populations of students receive services for disabilities and other conditions that are virtually impossible to deliver online. Prolonging a meaningful return to in-person education would result in hundreds of thousands of children in Los Angeles County being at risk for worsening academic, developmental and health outcomes.

We urge schools and school districts to continue to plan for the possibility of a return to in-person education at some point this academic year, if community transmission decreases to the point when this will be allowed. We also acknowledge families’ needs for adequate childcare opportunities and reinstating these in the form of camps or daycares will be similar process to the changes that schools need to make. The protocols and checklists developed by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health are excellent guides for schools and childcare for school aged children to use in their planning.

“Getting children back to school is probably the most important child health policy issue right now,” says Dr. Casey Nagel, co-chair of the chapter’s School Health Committee. “Everyone needs to do their part to decrease community transmission so that this can happen.”

“We can use the lessons we’ve learned in keeping other parts of society safe from COVID-19,” says Nagel. “There are a number of essential workplaces that have been able to keep essential workers safe from infection. There’s no reason to think that schools can’t do the same. The key is that they need adequate resources to do so.”

The local AAP chapter is willing to work with schools and school districts on their re-opening plans and waiver applications. We have over 80 pediatricians on our School Health Committee throughout the seven counties in our chapter who can do so. This group has also put together a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document of the most common questions we have been getting regarding this issue. These FAQs can be found on our website at:

<http://aapca2.org/schoolhealth/>

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Dr. Nagel is bilingual, bicultural Spanish-speaking and is available for interviews.

The American Academy of Pediatrics California Chapter 2 (AAP-CA2) is an organization of 1,500 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety and well-being of infants, children, adolescents and young adults. The AAP-CA2 serves the counties of Kern, Los Angeles, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara and Ventura.

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