

Hi Everyone,

CCS Restarting masks and health screenings

Due to an increase in Chittenden County cases of the Delta variant (Chittenden County cases are now being described as “substantial”: <https://www.newsbreak.com/news/2327967876873/cdc-chittenden-county-transmission-levels-substantial?s=oldSite&ss=a3>) CCS is restarting the use of masks for all staff and people in services unless they cannot be worn due to health conditions. We are concerned about the uptick in the very contagious Delta variant, which can still be transmitted by vaccinated people, and want to prevent it’s transmission to each other, the community and adults and children who are not vaccinated. We also ask that anyone who is symptomatic stay home and get tested. While we are disappointed to need to put this PPE/screening guidance back in play, we are comforted knowing our reasons and that, Hey! We already know how to do this! Staff will be provided new masks each day and everyone associated with CCS will be asked to do a daily health screening. We hope that our conservative move back to masking will be short term, but as always, we’ll monitor the situation, make decisions on behalf of everyone safety – and keep you informed.

Information on the Delta Variant: <https://www.wcax.com/2021/07/26/what-you-need-know-about-delta-variant-covid/>

I also found this article in Yale Medicine helpful in understanding the changes in transmissibility: <https://www.yalemedicine.org/news/5-things-to-know-delta-variant-covid>

“The CDC described Delta as more transmissible than the common cold and influenza, as well as the viruses that cause Ebola, smallpox, MERS, and SARS, Ebola—and called it as contagious as chickenpox in an internal document, a copy of which was obtained by and reported on in *The New York Times*. The highest spread of cases and severe outcomes is happening in places with low vaccination rates, and virtually all hospitalizations and deaths have been among the unvaccinated, the CDC says.” And “Face masks can provide additional protection and the WHO has encouraged mask-wearing even among vaccinated people. The CDC updated its guidance in July to recommend that both vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals wear masks in public indoor settings in areas of high transmission to help prevent Delta’s spread and to protect others, especially those who are immuno-compromised, unvaccinated, or at risk for severe disease.”

Staff shortage and service delivery

We continue to face a grave staffing shortage. As previously shared we have begun working on a plan to start some kind of 2:1 coverage and some group activities to try to get more people covered with our small but loyal group of frontline staff. Because of the uptick in cases we will pause working on this (we don’t want people too close either!) but are still strategizing ways to get everyone covered and we’ll keep you informed. Maybe there are ways to still have a few people together at once, so we will keep looking at it.

Remote activities!

In the meantime we still have virtual activities going strong and we are working on ramping them up again to make them even more robust. As we do this we are discouraging people from gathering in groups, we’re asking you to keep some airspace between you when you can, avoid large groups of

people, wear your mask at CCS and otherwise (when you can) and stay tuned. Right now we are not changing any travel guidance or places that we think people can go – we’re just asking you to be prudent and careful – while you wear your masks.

Today at our Covid Task force meeting we had a “check-out” (as opposed to a check-*in*) to see how everyone was doing with these changes. All of us feel a bit bummed and even sad to have to go “back” to prior guidance (though some of us felt it was imminent), we are confident that we know how to “this” and very, very glad that we all work together with each other, you, and Vermont where we know that we can do this. Hopefully, as I said, it will be short term and will be the only return to Covid guidance we’ll need to deploy.

Warmly,

Beth

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