



Ask Dr. Rodriguez



Top Ten Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
Edition #32 – Week of November 16, 2020

Questions are quoted as I received them directly from our community.

1. **I heard there are new guidelines for wearing masks. Is that true?**

Yes, on Monday, November 16, 2020, the California Department of Public Health released new [Guidance for the Use of Face Coverings](#) which supersedes prior face coverings guidance released on June 18, 2020. The purpose of this new guidance is to provide information about when face coverings are required. It mandates that face coverings be worn state-wide at all times when outside of the home, unless one or more of the exceptions outlined below apply. It does not substitute for existing guidance about physical distancing and hand hygiene.

Individuals are exempt from wearing face coverings in the following specific settings:

- Persons in a car alone or solely with members of their own household.
- Persons who are working in an office or in a room alone.
- Persons who are actively eating or drinking provided that they are able to maintain a distance of at least six feet away from persons who are not members of the same household or residence.
- Persons who are outdoors and maintaining at least 6 feet of physical distancing from others not in their household. Such persons must have a face covering with them at all times and must put it on if they are within 6 feet of others who are not in their household.
- Persons who are obtaining a service involving the nose or face for which temporary removal of the face covering is necessary to perform the service.
- Workers who are required to wear respiratory protection.
- Persons who are specifically exempted from wearing face coverings by other CDPH guidance.

The following individuals are exempt from wearing face coverings at all times:

- Persons younger than two years old. These very young children must not wear a face covering because of the risk of suffocation.
- Persons with a medical condition, mental health condition, or disability that prevents wearing a face covering. This includes persons with a medical condition for whom wearing a face covering could obstruct breathing or who are unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove a face covering without assistance. Such conditions are rare.
- Persons who are hearing impaired, or communicating with a person who is hearing impaired, where the ability to see the mouth is essential for communication.
- Persons for whom wearing a face covering would create a risk to the person related to their work, as determined by local, state, or federal regulators or workplace safety guidelines.

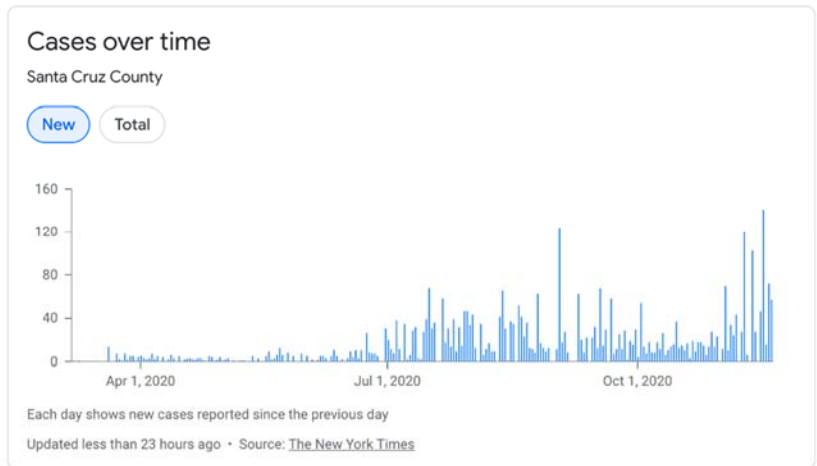
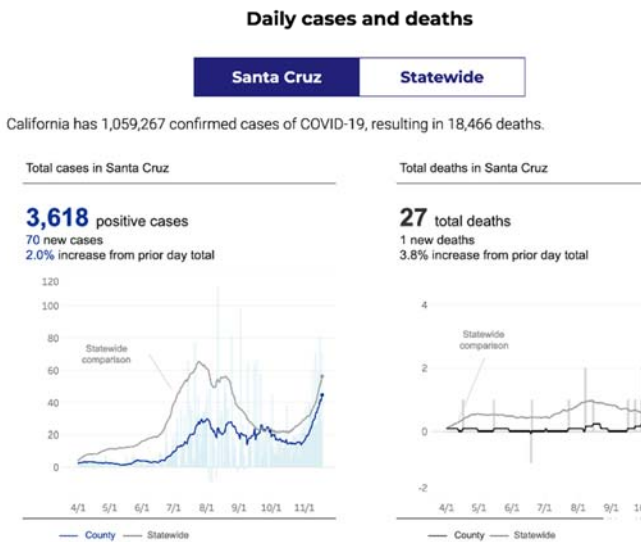
Note: Persons exempted from wearing a face covering due to a medical condition who are employed in a job involving regular contact with others must wear a non-restrictive alternative, such as a face shield with a drape on the bottom edge, as long as their condition permits it.

2. Will there be distance learning or in person learning in January?

On Monday, November 16, 2020 after Governor Newsom implemented the “emergency brake”, PVUSD issued a joint press release deciding to delay in person instruction until March 1, 2021. Therefore, when we come back from winter brake, students will continue with distance learning beginning January 12, 2021. When school resumes in January, we will continue offering Safe Spaces for students who do not have access to the internet or who are having challenges finding a suitable learning environment. We will also continue to provide small group in person instruction to special education students who are not meeting their IEP goals.

3. I would like to better understand the data that has driven the decision to delay your Hybrid reopening plans until March 1st 2021, can you share the data that you are using to drive this decision? What are the data points that you have evaluated that has led to the decision in delaying the reopening?

There are various data points from multiple sources that were used to determine the March 1, 2021 date including: 1) Recent “emergency brake” and shift to purple (widespread) for all counties in our region and the majority of California, 2) Santa Cruz County’s number and trajectory of confirmed cases, 3) California COVID Assessment Tool [forecast data](#), 4) Health Equity Index data and 5) data on flu season. The Santa Cruz case rate has increased by 200% in the last month with 783 currently active cases with almost 60% of the cases within PVUSD boundaries. As you can see in the graphs below, the number of positive cases is significantly higher than during previous months and are projected to continue to increase over the next four weeks. With these numbers, we will continue to be in purple (widespread) for weeks following this projected upward trend and therefore be unable to resume in person instruction anytime soon. PVUSD will continue to track data from the sources above.



California County Hospitalization Forecasts

Select a county to see how modeled number of hospitalizations compare with actual numbers to date and with the number of licensed hospital beds (black box).

Santa Cruz

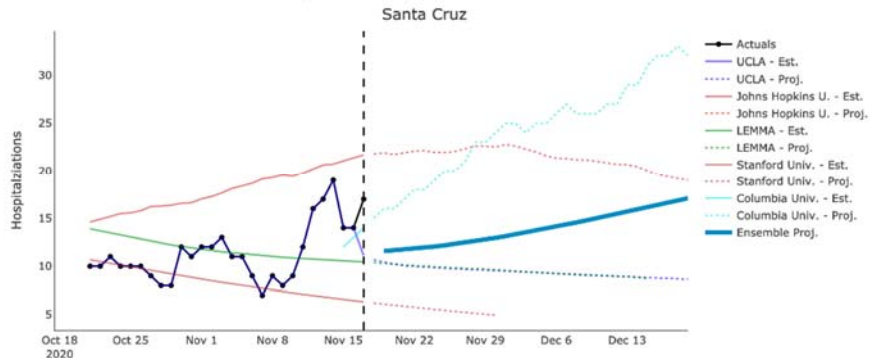
Current Daily Hospitalizations:

17 | 356
Actuals | Total Beds : 2020-11-17

Projected Daily Total:

17
Ensemble Forecast through 2020-12-19

[Download County Hospital Forecasts](#)



Unlike other “seasons” in the year, like spring and summer, there are no set dates for flu season in the United States and the timing of flu infections can vary from year to year. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), flu infections do tick up in the fall and peak in the winter, with February generally being the peak month for flu activity. According to [CDC data](#) for the 2019-2020 flu season, cases began to rise around the 47th week of the year — Nov. 18 — with steep increases starting mid-December. Last flu season started winding down around mid-March. Looking at all of that data and information, PVUSD wanted to inform students, parents and staff as quickly as possible. Therefore, the decision was made to postpone in person instruction until March 1, 2021.

4. What date will you inform families of if school will go back in the spring for hybrid education? Parents need to make alternate plans of moving students to other schools if PVUSD doesn't plan to go back.

We are consistently reviewing health data and information as indicated in the response to question #3. We will be committed to keeping our families safe and communicating with families as soon as we know new information with the target date of informing students, parents, and staff by February 1, 2021.

5. Since SC County is returning to the purple tier, should the school main offices still be open to the public? What will the district do to ensure that all essential office staff feels safe?

The safety of our staff and community has and is our number one priority. Each school site office has safety protocols in place to ensure that there is limited traffic and physical barriers between the staff and visitors. All staff has been provided personal protective equipment (PPE). Since July 1, 2020, staff has successfully served our community while keeping our offices open with no transmissions occurring through the work environment. As an added layer of protection, on December 3, 2020, we will begin surveillance testing for staff working on site.

6. Hello Dr. Rodriguez, I would like to ask if it is necessary to conduct in- person meetings with personnel from the district or other sites, on site? I have noticed the Principal at our school having in- person meetings on site. With COVID still very much present in our community and also going back to the purple tier, I believe this should not be an option as it increases the spread in a small office space with essential workers being present, adding another person there that is not part of the site's staff is not only unprofessional but also selfish.

All staff who are visiting a site should be wearing a mask and practicing physical distancing at all times to protect the health of others. One of the expectations of site administrators and district office administration is to be present and visible within the sites and in classrooms. During these daily school visits, I connect with site administration and staff. I virtually visit classrooms to gauge the effectiveness of our programs, supports and professional development and identify strengths, concerns, and ways to improve the system. It would not be possible to visit over 1,000 Google Classrooms without these in person visits.

7. My question to Dr. Rodriguez is one of equity, Teachers are allowed to teach from home and get a raise? But what about the classified employees who are mandated to work at the school sites and get exposed. What about their stipend? Teachers are capable of teaching in their classrooms since the janitors have been doing a great job of cleaning. Besides there are no kids in classrooms it would only be the teacher, teaching. Please explain the equity. Kind regards.

Staff work from the location in which they are able to best serve our students, families and community. Not all certificated staff are working from home, just as not all classified staff are working from their site or department. For example, all District and Site Administrators are working from their sites and departments. Classified instructional assistants are working from home as they support distance learning unless the students they serve are receiving small group in-person instruction. Many classified positions can only complete their duties from the sites such as Office Staff, Maintenance and Operations and Food Services. Any changes to wages and compensation such as stipends are negotiated.

8. If students are to return in January, will they be charged the \$25 bus pass application fee if they need to ride the bus?

No, we will not be charging any bus fees for the 2020-2021 school year.

9. **Dr. Rodriguez, with the county going back to the purple tier. I have heard from other parents who have kids with IEP's that they are planning on bringing them back to campus for an hour or two of instruction. My question is, why is the district allowing such a thing? Shouldn't the district not expose both students and staff to such environment? I feel like the SELPA department has good intentions in helping the students but are not carefully thinking of the consequences it will have. Also, it is also a bit unfair to those children with no IEP's who need more support but are not going back to campus following the state's guidelines. I feel like those guidelines should be applied to all students.**

The Special Services Department continues to be required by the State and Federal laws to implement students' IEPs. When possible, we are doing this through distance learning and our Individual Distance Learning Plans. Given the complexities of distance learning, not all of our students with IEPs can reasonably access their education through this model despite differentiation and accommodations. When all distance accommodations have been exhausted, the special education teachers, administration and site administration have worked in collaboration with our COVID-19 Nurse to design small group instruction that meets the guidelines set forth by the Santa Cruz County Health Department and the California Department of Public Health. The team utilizes an objective rubric to identify specific students in greatest need of in person instruction. After students are identified, the team then plans for the best method to provide in-person instruction.

The Special Service Team has worked closely with the COVID-19 nurse to put safety precautions into place for both students and staff. Staff were provided training on safety procedures and PPE in order to work safely with students. Classrooms are set up with HEPA air filters, protective screens, and clearly defined work areas. Teachers and students are given masks and face shields. Every student is screened upon arrival at the school site. The custodian disinfects the classrooms daily. In regards to general education students, the District follows the same safety protocols to continue to provide Safe Space learning areas for these students, where they can be on site and access the online learning environment.

10. **I'd like to better understand how the District is providing services for students with IEPs and enrolled in Special Education - specifically I'd like to know if robust in person education isn't made available, and special education students aren't receiving the education outlined in their IEP, how can this be reconciled? There are many students with IEPs in PVUSD that currently aren't receiving a high quality (or any) education from the district. My son is only receiving partial amounts of the education as outlined in his IEP and I'm unsure how this will impact his long term development in addition to his short term emotional well being.**

During an emergency situation, your IEP team is required by law to develop a Distance Learning Plan that takes into account the adjustments that may have to occur to your child's typical IEP service provision because of county-mandated restrictions to in person instruction. However, it is the IEP team's mandate to try to match - to every extent possible - the services and supports that would have been in place in person. So, for example, if your student received 270 minutes of Specialized Academic Instruction and 30 minutes of Speech and Language instruction when in person, the DLP should reflect that same service. What would likely be different, however, is the method of delivery. So during COVID-19 school closure, instead of in-person instruction, the IEP team has to offer the service via virtual means (Google Meet or teleconference). If you have specific concerns about your child's current services and supports, including their emotional well-being, please contact your child's case manager to schedule an IEP meeting or informal conference so that the team can address your concerns. As noted in the response above Special Services is starting to also bring students back on campus for in person instruction when all other strategies have been exhausted. This is happening with just a few sites at this time, but the plan will be to expand this support in the upcoming months.