



BELL COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH DISTRICT

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Health Authority

September 9, 2021

Dear fellow members of the Bell County Community,

We are writing to urge you consider what else you can do to protect yourself and your fellow citizens from the threat of the SARS-CoV-2 virus (COVID-19). The delta variant of the virus now accounts for greater than 95% of all US COVID-19 cases, and evidence suggests it is twice as contagious as the variant that previously spread through our county. Unfortunately, COVID-19 cases among children are on the rise, and we currently have multiple children in local hospitals suffering complications of this virus. Bell County is lagging behind the rest of the state with approximately 38.75% of eligible individuals fully vaccinated. The county is at Level 1 (Severe Uncontrolled Community Transmission) with an incidence rate of 451.9 per 100,000. Incidence rates in some local school districts are significantly higher than that, and students currently do not have an option for virtual learning.

The good news is that there are multiple things that we can do to help mitigate the spread of the virus. None are perfect, but if used in conjunction they give us our best opportunity to reduce COVID transmission and casualties. Consistent with guidelines provided by our trusted healthcare providers, it is recommended that you:

- If eligible, take advantage of one of the multiple opportunities we are fortunate to have locally to get vaccinated. The vaccine is your best defense against COVID-19 Note: 90% of inpatients in our local hospitals with COVID-19 are unvaccinated
- Wear appropriate face masks when indoors in public places. This is particularly important in settings with people ineligible for the vaccine (e.g., children under 12 in schools).
- Practice physical distancing from individuals who don't live in your household.
- Avoid crowded indoor spaces, especially if they have poor ventilation.
- Frequently wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

The time to act is now. Unless we come together to take the necessary steps, further outbreaks will be inevitable. As the spread continues, we will see increased disruptions to our educational systems due to not only those suffering from symptoms but also from those needing to quarantine to reduce further spread. Businesses still recovering from earlier losses will struggle to maintain an adequate workforce. Our healthcare system may reach a breaking point where allocation of scarce resources will become necessary.

We are deeply committed to promoting health and wellness in our community. We realize there are disagreements about balancing individual freedoms with the collective welfare of the community. Regardless of where you stand on those issues, we must work together to protect ourselves, our families, and our fellow citizens. We, the undersigned members of the Bell County Public Health District, implore you to do your part for yourself, your family, your neighbors and prevent further harm to our communities.

Sincerely,

Bell County Public Health District
Board of Health