



**VSSNA 2021-22 Town Hall #1 – Q&A
August 18, 2021**

Becca Bell - AAP-VT : Sharing a blog post I wrote about the upcoming school year for parents covering vaccination, masking, staying home when sick. Feel free to share with your communities.

<https://rebeccabell-md.medium.com/going-back-to-school-during-delta-a262a9812b7f>

Q: Kelly Cota : What are your thoughts around the media focusing on and telling the public how more, younger children are getting sicker with COVID now.... Based on your slide that said the fewer younger children are getting ill?

A: william raszka : Kelly: young children do not develop severe disease as often as adults. That data is clear. However, whenever we see a surge in cases in the community, we will see an increase in infected children and hospitalized children. Children make up a higher proportion of infections and hospitalized patients (in hot spots) because so few children are vaccinated.

A: Becca McCray - VSSNA President : Sometimes all we can do as school nurses is advocate consistently and constantly.

A: william raszka : Agree Becca: we do not know if the delta variant is more severe in children or adults.

Q: Reyna Maher : No requirements around distancing when having lunch...for students; this is concerning.

A: william raszka : Reyna: personally, I think students and adults should be distanced when unmasked and eating.

A: Becca McCray - VSSNA President : To Reyna's point - we as school nurses need to work with our principals and superintendents to share the medical community's recommendations and ask our district leaders to create some specific rules around distancing during lunch.

C: Reyna Maher : I agree. Unfortunately, we don't have any guidance on social distancing (with any activity) and therefore we are not able to have significant impact what is being done in buildings.

C: Susan Ciccarelli : Addressing meals/snacks: nice weather eat outside and even have portion of class time outside weather permitting. Dress for cooler days

Q: Megan Spaulding : Is it still ok for kids to be at recess unmasked? Large groups of kids outside unmasked playing all together. Thinking of elementary age, so unvaccinated kids.

A: william raszka : Megan: I am fine with children playing outside without masks. The overall risk for transmission outdoors is much lower.

Q: Kara Cassani : Recess? We were not going to require masks. Thoughts?

C: Megan Spaulding : Kara, Dr. Raszka said above that if you are outside, you do not need to mask even with kids mixing

A: william raszka : Kara: if recess is indoors, I would recommend masks.

Q: Jamie Sudol : What are your thoughts on nebulizer treatments for asthmatic students in school this year?

A: william raszka : Jamie: that would require appropriate PPE.

Q: Tara McMahon : What are your thoughts on distancing when the 80% is met in our high schools and masks are removed?

A: William Raszka : Tara: there is a rationale for that- particularly pre-delta variant. The assumption was that at 80% there would be "herd immunity". I am not sure that applies with the delta variant actually- I do not. It is also very hard to operationalize. We have lots of schools with K-8 and cross state schools. I think universal masking is the way to go.

A: Soph Hall, Past President VSSNA : Lobby your district for masking for everyone in school, regardless of percent eligible for vaccine—

A: Breena Holmes : hi everyone! We have local pediatricians you can partner with for advocating for masks in school. Please reach out to Stephanie Winters at swinters@vtmd.org if you need help with that connection

A: Becca McCray - VSSNA President : Thank you for this reminder Breena! Know that Stephanie Winters is ready for us to contact her and deploy area pediatrician to talk to school leadership about importance of universal masking.

Q: Kate DalPra : Can you speak a bit to the risks of “long-COVID” in children?

A: William Raszka : Kate: children can have prolonged symptoms but that seems to occur less frequently than in adults. 20% of adults may have persistent s/s. Two recent studies have addressed this in children. Both said it was fairly uncommon. Roughly 5% still had symptoms at 28 days.

Q: Kerry Farrell : Without the state of emergency will the algorithm still have clout? It was easy last year to enforce it with parents, I am nervous about the push back this year.

A: Becca McCray - VSSNA President : Kerry - yes the algorithm will have clout. The VSA and VPA have been working with VT AAP to understand our current state and continue to implement mitigation strategies. This algorithm is the mitigation strategy of keeping sick home and not in school.

Q: From Christine Spotts : Is it still stay home with 2 or more symptoms?

A: William Raszka : We recommend testing anyone with s/s of covid for evidence of COVID-19 -- regardless of vaccination status.

A: William Raszka : Christine: we are still working on the symptom complex guidelines and are getting feedback from stakeholders. Stay tuned!

A: Breena Holmes : Christine-children with any symptoms should stay home. the updated algorithm will have more clarity on symptoms- duration and earlier recommendation for testing

A: Nathaniel Waite : <https://education.vermont.gov/document/COVID-19-Prevention-Measures-for-Fall-2021> The 8/5 advisory memo also speaks to staying home when sick, Kerry.

Q: Jenna Dalla Mura : I think a family companion document [for pediatric algorithm] for schools with nurses would be helpful. It was essential last year -- Susan Ciccarelli : Where can we locate the companion document for families?

A: Breena Holmes : Susan- we have to update that document and hope to have it before school starts

C: Leah Flore : I appreciate the desire not to overwhelm the medical home/provider however many schools in Vermont do NOT have full-time Nurses they have non medical people making decisions.

Hopefully we will still have a communication tool with the medical home and they will provide support/alternative diagnosis etc in order to help schools with this problem.

Q: Florence Kelley : Any thoughts on music, band etc. Do we follow prior guidelines?

A: Julia Pringle : Florence: from a contact tracing perspective, we will continue to use the framework we developed last year. Here is the link to how we would approach contact tracing for various "high risk" activities, including during activities like singing and playing instruments.

<https://www.healthvermont.gov/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/COVID-19-Framework-High-Risk-Activities.pdf>

Q: Jenna Dalla Mura : How do children get a COVID test without an order if they have symptoms? Or maybe I misunderstood what Dr. Bell said

A: Breena Holmes : Jenna- VDH changed the policy and symptomatic patients can use the pop up sites

C: william raszka : We want to make it easy for children to get tested for COVID.

Q: Tara McMahon : Will there be more testing appointments available? I tried to get someone a test last Friday and they couldn't test until Monday.

A: william raszka : Tara: that has been a huge concern and has been elevated to the highest levels. We want to make sure access to testing is fast and easy. An issue here (and elsewhere) was that early in the summer they were not being used.

C: Sara Dunbar : Southern VT does not have testing available every day.

Q: Diane Kirson-Glitman : What about rapid testing? Has the Delta Variant made rapid testing, which is used a lot in the UK, made that rapid testing, possibly in the schools even less likely?

A: william raszka : Diane: rapid antigen testing is often used when it can be done quickly, reliably, and very frequently. We had used that in elder care facilities last winter.

C: Diane Kirson-Glitman : I think I was wondering if schools could administer rapid tests.

Q: Jessica Berg : If a unvaccinated child has had Covid, what level of protection, if any, does that offer in terms of the delta variant?

A: william raszka : Jessica: Interestingly, the CDC has not changed their guidelines on those who already have had COVID. The guidelines still state that those previously infected should be very well protected for at least 3 months.

Q: Suzy Walker : But Drs. Raszka and Bell: will we/should we accept rapid test results for children to re-enter school after they have symptoms or should we still require that it be a PCR test?

A: william raszka : Suzy: a positive rapid antigen test would be presumptive positive (and treated as such) but would be confirmed by PCR.

A: From C. Wetzel - VT Director NASN : Suzy - I think that Dr. Levine has been clear that PCR tests are the only acceptable result (stated in many press conferences during Q&A). Maybe someone can talk to when the rapid test is useful (e.g., long term care facility)

C: Suzy Walker : Thank you -- we were hoping that the PCR would remain the test that must be used for school attendance.

A: Julia Pringle : Suzy: PCR (not antigen) continues to be the test that people need to use to test out of quarantine on day 7

Q: Jane Ann Kantor : What about parents that say they know their student has natural antibodies because they have been previously infected with COVID so they will not vaccinate their child/student? What is the science right now regarding this?

A: william raszka : Jane: vaccination provides BETTER protection than natural infection. It is more robust, durable, and cross protective against variants. The guidelines are quite clear that anyone with previous infection can get vaccinated (and I believe they should).

Q: Courtney LaCasse : What is the recommendation on Isolation rooms/spaces?

A: Kaitlyn Kodzis (She/Her) : Courtney: This message from the AOE (<https://mailchi.mp/vermont/aoe-covid-19-update-6-29?e=8520ec9068>) states "In response to questions from school nurses about schools repurposing spaces that had formerly been used as School Health Offices/Isolation rooms, the Health Department is recommending that those spaces be preserved in the fall for students who develop COVID-like symptoms."

Q: Diane Kirson-Glitman : So return to play last year did require a medical clearance. To be clear, that is still the case?

10:16:28 From Becca Bell - AAP-VT : Here's the return to play algorithm:
http://contentmanager.med.uvm.edu/docs/clearance_for_return_to_play_after_covid19_infection_-_june_2021/vchip-documents/clearance_for_return_to_play_after_covid19_infection_-_june_2021.pdf?sfvrsn=864a35f5_2

Q Kelly Cota : So is the AOE 80% mark that they mention 'going forward to see if we should still mask'... is that not a valid benchmark to reach?

A: Becca McCray - VSSNA President : Kelly - the 80% mark will change as eligibility for vaccine changes. The AAP VT recommendation is for universal masking.

A: Nathaniel Waite : This is the vaccination dashboard. You can go onto the age, sex, race ethnicity tab to filter for your county and see the IZ rates by age. <https://www.healthvermont.gov/covid-19/vaccine/covid-19-vaccine-dashboard>

Q: C. Wetzel - VT Director NASN: Sorry if this was already addressed - I have been madly keeping the Zoom call going. What is the opinion of the UVM infection disease group on students attending overnight field trips?

A: william raszka: Whew. I am not thrilled about that. If children are sleeping in the same room overnight, they will not be masked and I worry about transmission. Camps who did this required vaccination (if applicable) and testing before entry into the camp.

Q: Kelly Cota : Breana, who was the contact to attend school board meetings?

A: Kaitlyn Kodzis (She/Her) : Stephanie Winters- swinters@vtmd.org

A: From Becca McCray - VSSNA President : Stephanie Winters - The Executive Director of VT AAP is the contact for asking for a pediatrician to come to your school board

Q: Jenny Anderson : Should screening questions be asked when visitors enter? (not symptoms of COVID)

A: Soph Hall, Past President VSSNA : Jenny anyone who is ill, MUST stay home

A: Breena Holmes : no screening at door, jenny

Q: Kara Cassani : So if no screening at door for visitors, then just a sign? For contact tracing?

A: Becca McCray - VSSNA President : So please advocate for your school buildings to have signs - If you are ill please do not enter.

A: Kaitlyn Kodzis (She/Her) : Some signage from the CDC <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communication/print-resources.html?Sort=Date%3A%3Adesc>