



Healthy People. Healthy Communities.

Edward D. Simmer, MD, MPH, DFAPA  
Director

**August 3, 2021**

## **DHEC Urges Local Governments to Emphasize Importance of COVID-19 Vaccinations; Consider New Mask Recommendations**

Dear County and Municipal Leaders,

On Tuesday, July 28, the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) echoed the CDC's latest guidance on COVID-19 safety and recommended public masking indoors for everyone, regardless of vaccination status.

This decision was taken in direct response to a surge in cases across South Carolina related to the Delta variant and a rise in breakthrough cases, which are cases where fully vaccinated individuals have contracted the Delta variant.

**Yesterday, South Carolina experienced a 15.1 percent positive rate with 2,399 new cases and 729 people hospitalized with COVID-19** across our state. In addition, **all of our 46 counties** are currently considered at a level of substantial (4 counties) or high (42 counties) disease transmission.

Given the rise of cases and public health risk, DHEC urges counties and municipalities to consider adopting practices and issuing recommendations that reflect this updated guidance as DHEC continues to monitor and track the COVID-19 virus in South Carolina daily.

**DHEC also continues to encourage municipal officials and local leaders to emphasize the importance of getting vaccinated to protect the health of your community and our state.**

While we recognize that from a public health perspective this is a disheartening set back, we also understand that the fight is not yet done.

Vaccine hesitancy by people across multiple demographics has allowed the virus time to continue to spread and mutate into the Delta variant we see today, which is a far more transmissible version of the virus than we faced before.

Therefore, as the disease continues to adapt, so must we. DHEC is committed to working with our local partners to take informed, science driven actions aimed at ultimately ending the COVID-19 pandemic.

Every South Carolinian life is important, and every South Carolinian life demands our best efforts to protect it.

Efforts like promoting masking and vaccination are designed to accomplish that goal and with your help in your community, we can save lives and stop the spread of this deadly disease.

Thank you for helping us with this noble effort, and please don't hesitate to reach out to us for engagement ideas, assistance, or expertise at (803) 898-1096.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Edward D. Simmer in cursive script.Handwritten signature of Brannon Traxler in cursive script.

Dr. Edward D. Simmer, Agency Director  
Dr. Brannon Traxler, Public Health Director