



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Ohio Department of Health Reminds Families That Best Protection Against COVID-19 is Vaccinations as Cases Increase**

COLUMBUS – The Ohio Department of Health is reporting a large increase in COVID-19 cases over the last month across the state, including among students who are heading back to school. Statewide, the reported illness onset date of Monday, Aug. 23, showed 4,133 Ohioans with COVID-19, including 663 school-age Ohioans 5-18. One month prior on Friday, July 23, this data was 903 cases statewide, including 147 cases among Ohioans 5-18 – marking a 358% increase statewide, and a 351% increase among school-age Ohioans.

Similarly, weekly data from earlier in the summer, the week of July 4, 2021, shows 1,987 COVID-19 cases statewide, including 324 Ohioans ages 5-18. The most recent complete week of data, Aug. 15, 2021, shows 20,056 COVID-19 cases statewide, including 3,005 COVID-19 cases among those ages 5-18 – an increase of 909% among all Ohioans, and 827% among school-age Ohioans. As lab reports continue to be received, the data for the week of Aug. 15 could increase.

Today, the Ohio Department of Health is also reporting a statewide case rate of 338.1 per 100,000 residents, with every county in the state higher than 100 per 100,000 residents. Statewide, a total of 5,395 COVID-19 cases have been reported within the last 24 hours, similar to daily numbers that were seen in December and January during the winter surge of cases. The most recent date when a similar number of cases reported occurred on January 28, 2021, we reported an increase of 5,432 cases from the previous day.

“With many districts going back to school last week, the number of illnesses from Monday, Aug. 23 is troubling,” explained Ohio Department of Health Director Bruce Vanderhoff, MD, MBA. “As students statewide continue to return to their classrooms, this high figure should be yet another indicator to parents and families that the best protection from COVID-19 is for those 12 and older to choose to be vaccinated, and for those who aren’t vaccinated to wear masks.”

The Ohio Department of Health’s goal is to keep K-12 students in school, in-person five days a week. In-person learning is very important for the cognitive, social, and emotional development of our children, and can be conducted safely even in the face of COVID-19, particularly when schools employ layered prevention strategies including masking, social distancing, good ventilation and good hygiene practices, along with vaccination of our teachers and staff. Adopting layered prevention measures in schools now will help ensure students can learn in-person as much as possible this year, and keep children participating in extracurricular activities.

“COVID-19 vaccines are our best protection, and our way out of this pandemic,” Dr. Vanderhoff stated. “If you haven’t yet been vaccinated, talk to your doctor to get the facts. For those ages 12-17 who are eligible for the Pfizer vaccine, it takes 5 weeks to be fully vaccinated.”

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### **About the Ohio Department of Health**

*The Ohio Department of Health’s mission is advancing the health and well-being of all Ohioans by transforming the state’s public health system through unique partnerships and funding streams; addressing the community conditions and inequities that lead to disparities in health outcomes; and implementing data-driven, evidence-based solutions.*

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