

The State of Our Children: Kids and COVID-19

Media Briefing Summary
July 30, 2020



From Todd Suntrapak, President & CEO

- Every judgment we make rests on a single disturbing reality that we cannot escape – and that is Fresno County – and many of our Valley counties – have been determined to be areas with “high levels of COVID-19 community spread,” a fact that we cannot ignore and which responsibly must drive every health decision we reach. Fresno County, along with six other Valley counties, are on the State watch list, singled out as unsafe for our communities’ kids, teachers and staff to return to school.
- Valley Children’s Healthcare fully agrees with the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) that, under normal circumstances, kids do better in school. They have access to great teachers, chances to be with friends, social and emotional support, nutrition, school nursing, physical activity and more. **But these are not normal circumstances.**
- The rest of the AAP statement supporting the reopening of schools is often omitted by individuals using it as “evidence” that our kids should go back to school. The full statement (available at www.aap.org) goes on to say:

“Science should drive decision-making on safely reopening schools. Public health agencies must make recommendations based on evidence, not politics. We should leave it to health experts to tell us when the time is best to open up school buildings, and listen to educators and administrators to shape how we do it.

Local school leaders, public health experts, educators and parents must be at the center of decisions about how and when to reopen schools, taking into account the spread of COVID-19 in their communities and the capacities of school districts to adapt safety protocols to make in-person learning safe and feasible.

For instance, schools in areas with high levels of COVID-19 community spread should not be compelled to reopen against the judgment of local experts. A one-size-fits-all approach is not appropriate for return to school decisions.”

- That is why the “high level of community spread” in our Valley counties demands that we act safely, responsibly, and with sound judgment and common sense.
- The single biggest thing we can do to get our kids back in school is to practice behaviors that will slow the spread of the virus. Only then will our counties be removed from the State watch list and school reopening will be an option.

Key Findings from Recent Pediatric Literature: Transmission Rates in Children Younger than 5 Years

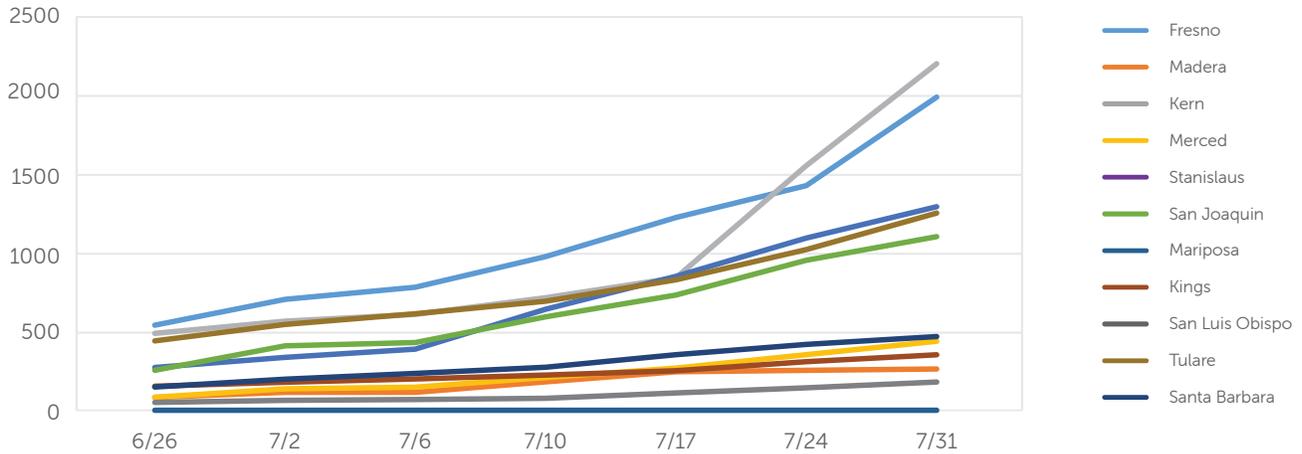
In the July 30, 2020, online edition of JAMA Pediatrics, physicians from the Ann and Robert H. Lurie Children’s Hospital (Chicago) and the Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine report that their analysis of 145 patients suggests that “children younger than 5 years with mild to moderate COVID-19 have high amounts of SARSCoV-2 viral RNA in their nasopharynx compared with older children and adults. Behavioral habits of young children and close quarters in school and day care settings raise concern for SARS-CoV-2 amplification in this population as public health restrictions are eased. In addition to public health implications, this population will be important for targeting immunization efforts as SARS-CoV-2 vaccines become available.” (www.jamapediatrics.com)

From Dr. David Christensen, SVP, Medical Affairs & Chief Physician Executive

- This study concludes that young children have 10-100x more COVID-19 in their upper respiratory tract compared to adults and, therefore, they can potentially be important drivers of COVID-19 spread in the general population.
- This study, along with others, offers evidence that children are, in fact, both driving the transmission of COVID-19, as well becoming ill from the virus. We will provide updates on current research in subsequent briefings.

Current Regional Data

Of the 11 counties in the Valley Children's service area, seven are on the State watch list, indicating the rate of transmission, hospitalizations, ICU bed capacity and deaths are trending in the wrong direction. As of July 31, 2020, we are seeing an increase in the number of children between the ages of 0-17 testing positive for COVID-19. (Note: Stanislaus County data includes patients up to the age of 20.)



Current Data and Trends

Across Valley Children's Healthcare Network

8,797

Total Number of Tests Administered On Patients

10.0%

Positivity Rate

96

Total Number of COVID+ Patients Requiring Hospitalization

We have seen a rise in the positivity rates of children tested in our Emergency Department over the last 14 days.

Everyone Can Do Their Part

**SLOW THE SPREAD
WEAR A MASK**

For More Information visit valleychildrens.org/covid19 or email contactus@valleychildrens.org



**Wear a Mask • Maintain Social Distance and Avoid Large Gatherings
Wash Your Hands • Clean High-Touch Surfaces Frequently**