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January 8, 2021

TO: All TK-12 Schools

FROM: Dr. Barbara Ferrer, Ph.D., M.P.H., M.Ed.
Director *Barbara Ferrer*

SUBJECT: **Public Health Strongly Recommends Suspending In-Person Instruction for Month of January**

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (DPH) strongly recommends that all TK-12 schools in the county suspend in person student instruction, services and activities during the month of January as much as possible. For the remainder of the month, on campus activities should be limited to implementation of distance learning, food distribution, and other minimum essential operations. Child care for school age children may continue to occur at school sites to support the needs of essential workers who do not have the option to stay home. In person support for high need students should be limited to those necessary services and assessments that cannot be delivered virtually and cannot reasonably be postponed until February. Similarly, employees who can perform their duties virtually should be encouraged and assigned to telework to the extent possible. In person meetings for staff are strongly discouraged and should be moved to virtual platforms.

This strong recommendation comes in response to the unprecedented surge in COVID-19 cases in Los Angeles County and the state of California that began in November and worsened considerably during the month of December. We have not yet seen the full impact of the travel and social gatherings that occurred during the end of year holidays which will manifest later this month and likely add to the current overburden on our hospitals and emergency departments. The diminishing capacity of our health care system to care for the most severely ill among us is at a critical juncture and we all must do what we can to mitigate this trend. The best way to accomplish that is for all Angelenos to remain at home as much as possible and limit their social interactions to their immediate household members. This recommendation for schools is intended to support this strategy.

In addition, as community transmission continues to soar, all schools will encounter an increasing number of cases in their staff and students. The Public Health order that requires

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school closure for two weeks whenever an outbreak occurs (3 or more epidemiologically linked cases within 14 days) remains in effect. Limiting all on campus activities for the next three weeks until the end of the month will avoid the inevitable disruption that will affect many of your facilities.

Finally, pending school waiver applications to return students in grades TK-2 for in person instruction are being held for final approval at this time. Schools may continue to submit their applications and DPH staff will continue to process them and work with you to complete them. However, final approvals are currently being held in alignment with the state's recommendation to refrain from additional waiver approvals while the county's case rate remains at an extremely high level.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please let me know.

BF:rg