

# SOUTH DAKOTA STATE MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

*Values. Ethics. Advocacy.*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

Elizabeth Reiss  
Director of Communications  
South Dakota State Medical Association  
605-336-1965  
[ereiss@sdsma.org](mailto:ereiss@sdsma.org)

## **SDSMA Urges All School Districts in South Dakota to Require Face Coverings**

SIOUX FALLS – July 22, 2020 — South Dakota State Medical Association President Benjamin C. Aaker, MD, writing on behalf of the association’s nearly 2,000 members, sent a letter on Tuesday, July 21 to school board presidents at each public school in South Dakota, urging them to require face coverings for the 2020-21 school year.

“It is important for everyone who will be in school buildings to wear face coverings this fall,” Dr. Aaker said. As discussions continue over how our schools can safely open during the COVID-19 pandemic, requiring educators, staff and students to wear face coverings is an effective way to keep everyone safe.”

The SDSMA joins the [CDC in calling for all Americans to wear a face covering to prevent COVID-19 spread](#). A [recent piece](#) in the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)* reviewed the latest science and affirms that cloth face coverings are a critical tool in the fight against COVID-19 that could reduce the spread of the disease, particularly when used universally within communities.

In addition to asking school districts across the state to adopt face covering requirement policies, the SDSMA is recommending school districts adopt [CDC guidelines for keeping youth athletes safe](#).

The full text of the letter sent by the SDSMA is below:

*As schools prepare for the fall 2020 school year, the South Dakota State Medical Association (SDSMA) strongly recommends school districts to require educators, staff and students to wear face coverings and follow CDC guidelines related to youth sporting activities.*

*On July 14, 2020, the CDC issued a guideline recommending that Americans wear masks to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. In that statement, the CDC affirmed that cloth face coverings are a critical tool in the fight against COVID-19 and their use could reduce the spread of the disease when used universally within communities.*

*The CDC guideline for face coverings is based on two recent studies. One study, published in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA), concluded that adherence to universal masking policies reduced SARS-CoV-2 transmission within a Boston hospital system, and the second, published in the CDC's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR), showed that wearing a mask prevented the spread of infection from two hair stylists to their customers in Missouri.*

*In agreement with CDC guidelines, the SDSMA believes that everyone should wear a cloth face covering when leaving their homes, regardless of having symptoms of COVID-19, with the exception of young children under the age of 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.*

*Cloth face coverings may prevent the person wearing the mask from spreading COVID-19. If everyone were to wear a cloth face covering when out in public the risk of exposure to COVID-19 can be reduced for the community. Since people may spread the virus before symptoms start, or for those who have the virus but show no symptoms, wearing a cloth face covering may protect others around you. Additionally, face coverings worn by others may protect you from getting the virus from people carrying it.*

*Additional CDC guidelines to prevent the spread of COVID-19 include:*

- *Staying home as much as possible;*
- *Practicing social distancing by remaining at least 6 feet away from others; and*
- *Washing hands often.*

*The SDSMA strongly recommends that as boards are considering their plans for the 2020-21 school year they follow CDC guidelines and consider requiring cloth face coverings for educators, staff and students when in public including in schools. Schools should also follow CDC guidelines for keeping youth athletes safe. The SDSMA believes that by following these guidelines schools can protect the health of educators, staff and students who will be in classrooms and on the field together with others for up to five days a week for seven hours a day. We strongly recommend that boards adopt this same position.*

*Sincerely,*



*Benjamin C. Aaker, MD  
SDSMA President*

The SDSMA serves physicians, residents and medical students who are dedicated to the health of South Dakotans. The mission of the SDSMA is to promote the art and science of medicine, protect and improve the health of the public, and advocate for the well-being of physicians and patients and the best environment for physicians to advance quality health care. Learn more about the SDSMA at [www.sdsma.org](http://www.sdsma.org).