**{INSERT PHYSICIAN PRACTICE INFORMATION}**

[Date]

**To our Parents, Caregivers and Patients:**

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues in our community and across the nation, the pediatric providers at XXX are here to care for your family.  We follow the most current recommendations from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), as well as the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), and will continue to use guidance from these organizations to care for your children during the pandemic.

As children return to in-person learning at school, it is important to underscore the importance of masks. Data clearly shows wearing of masks can slow the spread of COVID-19 (also known as SARS2 Coronavirus or SARS-CoV-2 infection), which is why it is such an important part of the safety measures for schools this Fall.  The CDC and AAP recommend anyone 2 years of age and older wear a mask / face covering.  As physicians, we strongly support this recommendation. Therefore, mask exemption letters and mask exemption forms for children will not be signed unless one of the following conditions is present:

1. Children under age 2 years;
2. Any child unable to remove the face covering without assistance;
3. A child with a significant behavioral or psychological issue undergoing treatment that is exacerbated specifically by a face covering;
4. A child with severe autism or with extreme developmental delay who may become agitated or anxious wearing a mask; and
5. A child with a facial deformity that causes airway obstruction.

If your child has difficulty wearing a mask, here are a few suggestions to help them become accustomed to wearing a mask:

* Try different masks, including different styles (pleated, duck bill, ear loop, etc.) and fabrics, as approved by your school.
* Practice wearing a mask at home. Start with short periods of time, even a few minutes at first, and gradually increase.
* Offer your child stickers or small rewards for keeping their mask on.
* If your child has known significant sensory issues, work with the professionals most familiar with your child, such as his/her occupational therapist (OT) or applied behavioral analysis (ABA) therapist, now to prepare for wearing a mask at school.
* If your child has anxiety, work with his/her counselor or psychologist now to prepare for wearing a mask at school.
* Be a good role model. If your child sees you wearing a mask comfortably without complaining, they are more likely to accept it.
* Be patient and keep working on it. Masks likely will be recommended for a long time, so putting effort in now to get used to them will make this issue easier in the coming months.
* If permitted by the school, allow your child to help choose a mask they like so they will be excited about wearing it. Choose some with familiar characters on it or in your child’s favorite color.
* Have a positive attitude when discussing masks with your child. You can use statements like “Isn’t it great that we can wear these masks to help keep us all safer when we are around other people” or “Just like washing our hands, masks help us to not spread germs.”

We hope this information helps you and your child. You may wish to visit the CDC’s website on face coverings at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html> that includes information on how to select, wear and clean masks.

Sincerely,

[Handwritten Signature Here…]

[Typed signature here…]

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