



## Hidalgo County Commissioners Court

**Richard F. Cortez**  
*County Judge*

**David L. Fuentes**  
*Commissioner, Precinct 1*

**Eduardo "Eddie" Cantu**  
*Commissioner, Precinct 2*

**Everardo "Ever" Villarreal**  
*Commissioner, Precinct 3*

**Ellie Torres**  
*Commissioner, Precinct 4*

**OFFICE OF  
COUNTY JUDGE  
RICHARD F. CORTEZ**

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## NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Friday, August 13, 2021

### **Hidalgo County Health Authority issues mask mandate for area schools, gives local school boards option to opt out**

**EDINBURG** – Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. Ivan Melendez, in his capacity as the Hidalgo County Local Health Authority, issued an order Friday that students, staff and visitors to all public and private schools, from grades kindergarten through grade 12, must wear facial coverings while inside area schools regardless of vaccination status. Any Hidalgo County school district may opt out of the mandate if the respective school board votes to do so, the orders said.

The order is effective immediately and remains in effect for nine weeks. The order was issued days before the start of most in-class instruction is scheduled to begin in most Hidalgo County schools. It also comes following a meeting between county officials and area school superintendents. The mandate shall be in effect unless the school's governing body votes to opt out of the mandate.

"I have said consistently that my actions regarding this pandemic will be based in science so I commend Dr. Melendez for his recommendation aimed at keeping our school children safe," Cortez said. "We are seeing dramatic increases in the number of pediatric patients being admitted into our hospitals because of this disease and I support every effort to keep our children safe."

The order includes several exceptions, including anyone under age two; anyone who is consuming drinks or food; anyone exercising outdoors; and anyone with medical conditions.

In addition, the order recommends physical distancing of at least three feet between students in a classroom.

The order, signed on Friday, comes during a week when ten percent of Hidalgo County's COVID hospital population is made up of pediatric patients under the age of 19.

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**ATTACHMENT:** Signed order.

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*Hidalgo County is home to one of the fastest growing regions in the nation. We provide health and justice to the over 800,000 residents of our county. We strive to be accessible and responsive to our citizens by providing excellent public service through the values of leadership, transparency, fairness, collaboration, respect and fiscal responsibility. Follow our social media feed at [www.co.hidalgo.tx.us/followus](http://www.co.hidalgo.tx.us/followus)*