

FOIA Request, DHEC Responses & Follow-up Questions

2022- 2023

I am requesting records from the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC) under the Freedom of Information Act. (FOIA request made 09/15/2022)

- 1. Please provide all SCDHEC federal and state 1.) internal guidance documents and/or 2.) detailed instructions of specific protocols SCDHEC provided to instruct individuals and/or hospital systems collecting and reporting South Carolina COVID-19 associated hospitalization and death data which was published on the SCDHEC website. (From March 2020 through August 2022)**

DHEC response for #1: See 17 pdfs sent by DHEC which identifies testing instructions and protocols but not details or instructions regarding reporting COVID-19 associated hospitalizations and deaths. (received 01/05/2023)

*Follow-up Q. Thank you for sending the pdfs. Based on this correspondence we conclude that there are no other DHEC documents related to the data criteria of COVID hospitalizations and deaths that were published on the DHEC website. Is this correct?

DHEC Follow-up Response #1:

1. We have provided you with all of the materials responsive to your request of which we are aware and have been able to find. (received 02/09/2023)

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- 2. (a) Please provide all scientific evidence, data and source documents reviewed by SCDHEC employees which determined the strong recommendation of universal masking of children in SCDHEC's COVID-19 Guidance For K-12 Schools updated on 01/15/2022.**

* DHEC response for #2(a). (received 11/16/2022)

Hi Denise,

It was nice speaking with you. For the above-referenced FOI request I am providing two links to DHEC's website. I do apologize - I entered you email address incorrectly and I believe that is why you didn't receive my email.

<https://scdhec.gov/covid19/schools-childcare-centers-covid-19>

Schools & Childcare Centers (COVID-19) | SCDHEC

CDC Operational (Non-Outbreak) Guidance for K-12 Schools and Early Care; School and Childcare Exclusion List; Frequently Asked Questions for Parents and Caregivers about COVID-19 Precautions in School (CDC); Attestation Form (Spanish/Español) - Parents/guardians who have performed an at-home rapid COVID test on their child may complete an Attestation Form for At-Home COVID-19 Test (Spanish ...

scdhec.gov

<https://scdhec.gov/news-releases/dhec-recommends-vaccinations-mask-use-other-covid-19-protocols-school-guidance-k-12>

The recommendations DHEC provided were based off of CDC guidelines.

- 2. (b) Please also include SCDHEC's employees risk vs benefit analysis of universal masking of children in a school setting related to 1.) developmental delays 2.) social-emotional outcomes and 3.) educational outcomes which determined the guidance in the 01/15/2022 -SCDHEC document.**

DHEC Response 2(b). : (received 01/04/2023)

I would provide them with Dr. Bell's and my info published

here: <https://scdhec.gov/events/dhec-board-meeting-august-20-2021>

DHEC Board Meeting - August 20, 2021 | SCDHEC

South Carolina Board of Health and Environmental Control Agenda August 20, 2021. Call to Order – 10:00 a.m., E Room (#3420) South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control,

scdhec.gov

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*Follow-up Q: Thank you for Dr Traxler's and Dr. Bell's presentation, presentation video and DHEC and CDC links. Based on this correspondence we conclude that DHEC has not analyzed risk vs benefit and the safety and efficacy of universal K-12 masking since late summer of 2021. Is this correct?

DHEC Follow-up Response #2: (received 02/09/2023)

3. DHEC staff, including Drs. Bell and Traxler, continue to keep up with and read the well-designed, peer-reviewed scientific studies regarding the topic of masking, in order to make evidence-based recommendations, but these sources of information are read online and are not available.

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- 3. Please provide all scientific evidence, data and source documents reviewed by SCDHEC employees which determined SCDHEC's recommendation of universal COVID-19 vaccination of South Carolina children in the following age ranges: age 6 months - 4 years old, age 5-11 years old and age 12-18 years old. Please also provide SCDHEC's employees risk vs benefit analysis review of universal COVID-19 vaccination for each age group.**

*** DHEC response for #3, (received 01/04/2023)**

I don't know of any written risk vs benefit analysis developed by DHEC, and I can't even recall all of the data and studies and articles I read on the vaccines, their development, their trials in children, etc. I read many articles and studies on journal websites or other reputable sources of information that I didn't save. You could check with Stephen and Jonathan in Immunizations to see what stuff they might have, but I am confident no one could fully produce or recall every piece of data or information they learned on the topic.

*Follow-up Q: Thank you for this response. Based on this correspondence we conclude that Stephen and Jonathan in Immunizations have nothing else to add to the response related to risk benefit analysis of universal COVID vaccination of the various pediatric age groups. Is this correct?

DHEC Follow-up Response #3 (received 02/09/2023)

DHEC recommends children get vaccinated against COVID-19 in order to decrease the rare but real serious cases, including deaths, that occur in that population, as well as to decrease the risk of a child developing MIS-C or long COVID, lower the odds of transmitting the virus to high risk family members, and to reduce children missing school and other activities due to being sick. Adverse effects of the vaccine in children are rare, with myocarditis occurring in only 105.9 children per one million doses of the Pfizer vaccine given to males aged 16-17 years old, which was the highest rate among children. In addition, multiple studies have shown that the risk of myocarditis is higher after COVID-19 infection than after vaccination.

The CDC's analysis of the safety of the vaccines for children and teenagers, including links to the articles with the scientific studies' results that are the basis for the analysis, can be found using this link:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/vaccine-safety-children-teens.html>

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- 4. Please provide all SCDHEC employee's follow-up, investigation and/or communication with the Center for Disease Control and Prevention and/or Food and Drug Administration related to the over 8,000 South Carolina COVID-19 vaccine adverse events reported to the Vaccine Adverse Reporting System (VAERS).**

***DHEC response for #4 (received 01/04/2023)**

DHEC does not do follow up or investigate VAERS submissions. In fact, CDC doesn't provide us with the information on or communicate with us about entries related to SC, and they (and/or the FDA) do all of the investigating and analysis of those reports.

*Follow-up Q: Thank you for this response. Based on this correspondence we conclude that DHEC depends on federal agencies to conduct post-market-surveillance on the COVID vaccination program and does not independently monitor post-market outcomes of COVID vaccination. Is this correct?

DHEC Follow-up Response #4 (received 02/09/2023)

- DHEC does not perform these activities because it is already done at the national level by the CDC and FDA, as the authorizing and regulatory entities for vaccines, and DHEC collecting the data would require providers and others who report adverse effects to duplicate their efforts for reporting.