



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Contact:

Lauren Brendel | System Director, Marketing and Communications  
[LBrendel@bozemanhealth.org](mailto:LBrendel@bozemanhealth.org) | 425-260-7124

Zachary Benoit | Media Relations  
[ZBenoit@billingsclinic.org](mailto:ZBenoit@billingsclinic.org) | 406-697-4924

Holly Whaley | Communications Specialist  
[Holly.Whaley@gallatin.mt.gov](mailto:Holly.Whaley@gallatin.mt.gov) | 406-582-3155

Buck Taylor | Director, Community Development and Administration  
[taylorb@chphealth.org](mailto:taylorb@chphealth.org) | 406-539-9358

**Bozeman Health, Billings Clinic Bozeman, Community Health Partners, and  
Gallatin City-County Health Department Support Area Schools Mask Requirement**  
*Face coverings and masks are proven to help limit the spread of infectious diseases*

Bozeman, MT [August 27, 2021] — Bozeman Health, Billings Clinic Bozeman, Community Health Partners, and Gallatin City-County Health Department are committed to the health and well-being of the communities we have the honor of serving. Leaders, physicians, providers, and healthcare workers within our respective organizations strongly support the recent decisions of Montana State University, Bozeman School District, and all local schools that require masks of school faculty and staff, students, and visitors.

The last year has made it clear that keeping kids in school is critical for their mental health and academic success. We must limit the spread of COVID-19 to minimize school disruptions from quarantine and illness. Masks are one of the most effective strategies we have to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Decreasing the spread of COVID-19 is especially important for our children and community members who have not yet been vaccinated against COVID-19. We know that the vaccine significantly decreases COVID-19 transmission rates and nearly eliminates serious disease and death. Unfortunately, for the youngest members of our community, immunizations are not yet an option. Masks are their best defense.

Since the highly contagious Delta variant has arrived in our community, there has been a sharp escalation in the number of COVID-19 positive inpatients at Bozeman Health Deaconess Hospital and Big Sky Medical Center. In the past month, 28 of 39 of all hospitalized patients confirmed positive for COVID-19 have been unvaccinated. Only one person admitted to the intensive care unit at Deaconess Hospital in the past month was known to be fully vaccinated.

Additionally, across the country we are seeing a significant increase in the number of children with COVID-19 admitted to the hospital – in some places, more than at any other point in the pandemic.

We want to protect our kids and keep them in school. We applaud the decisions made by Montana State University, Bozeman School District, and all area schools that require masks in school. Immunization and masking helps to ensure the health and well-being of our students, educators, their families and the wider community. We encourage all to mask, to practice hand hygiene, to stay home when sick, and to get the COVID-19 vaccine.

### **Bozeman Health**

John Hill, MBA  
President and CEO

Diane Patterson, MN, MPH, RN  
Chief Nursing Officer

Mark Williams, MD  
Chief Physician Officer

Kathryn Bertany, MD  
President  
Bozeman Health Hospitals

Douglas Hartnett, MD  
Chief Quality & Safety Officer

Kristen Day, MD  
Pediatrician;  
Medical Officer, GCCHD

Kallie Kujawa, MN, RN  
Incident Command Lead

David Crites, MD  
Chief of Medical Staff

### **Billings Clinic**

Scott Ellner, DO  
CEO

Clint Seger, MD  
Regional Chief Medical  
Officer

Michelle Pierson, MD  
Interim Chief Medical  
Officer

Sam Sillitti, MD  
Bozeman Physician Chief

### **Community Health Partners**

Lander Cooney, MS  
CEO

Buck Taylor, MPH  
Director, Community  
Development and  
Administration

### **Gallatin City-County Health Department**

Lori Christenson, MPH  
Public Health Officer

Anna Snyder, MSN, RN  
Director of Human Services

Jill Ellison, RN  
Program Manager,  
Communicable Disease,  
Immunization



### **About Bozeman Health**

Bozeman Health is an independent, locally owned and controlled integrated healthcare delivery system serving Southwest Montana. As a faith-based, nonprofit organization governed by a volunteer community board of directors, Bozeman Health is the largest private employer in Gallatin County with more than 2,400 employees, including 240 medical providers representing 50 clinical specialties. Accredited by DNV, it is our privilege to deliver expert, compassionate health and wellness services across the care continuum, designed to meet the diverse healthcare needs of the communities we serve. Learn more about Bozeman Health at [BozemanHealth.org](http://BozemanHealth.org).

### **About Billings Clinic**

Billings Clinic is Montana's largest health system, serving Montana, Wyoming and the western Dakotas. A not-for-profit organization led by a physician CEO, Billings Clinic is governed by a board of community members and physicians. At its core, Billings Clinic is a physician-led, integrated multispecialty group practice with a 304-bed hospital and Level II trauma center. Billings Clinic has more than 4,700 employees, including more than 480 physicians and advanced practitioners offering more than 50 specialties. Billings Clinic is the first Magnet-designated health care organization in Montana and a member of the Mayo Clinic Care Network. More information can be found at [www.billingsclinic.com](http://www.billingsclinic.com).

### **About Community Health Partners**

Community Health Partners provides medical, dental, and behavioral healthcare to everyone, regardless of their ability to pay, serving 12,000 patients annually from clinical sites in Belgrade, Bozeman, Livingston, and West Yellowstone. Learn more at <https://chphealthmt.org/>.

### **About Gallatin City-County Health Department**

The Gallatin City-County Health Department is dedicated to protecting and promoting the health and well-being of county residents and the environment through the efforts of our dedicated and skilled employees. The Gallatin City-County Health Department is comprised of two different divisions, Human Services (HS) focusing on family health and community health services, and Environmental Health Services (EHS) focusing on ensuring our community's food, air, land, and water are clean and safe. For more information on the Gallatin City-County Health Department, please visit our website [healthygallatin.org](http://healthygallatin.org) and follow us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Find information on COVID-19 vaccines in Gallatin County at [healthygallatin.org/covid-19-vaccines](http://healthygallatin.org/covid-19-vaccines).