



Austin-Travis County Withdraws its Mask Mandate

The Austin-Travis County health authority withdrew its COVID-19 mask mandate in compliance with Governor Abbott's [Executive Order GA-36](#) ("Executive Order"), which went into effect on Friday, May 21, 2021. Under the Executive Order, local governments (including counties and cities) are prohibited from requiring the use of masks. Local governments that attempt to impose a mask mandate can be subject to a fine of up to \$1,000.

On May 18, 2021, the Austin-Travis County health authority had extended its [COVID-19 rules](#), while loosening its mask mandate for those who are fully vaccinated. The new rules stated that businesses may choose to allow fully vaccinated individuals to remove their masks indoors when there are less than 500 people, and outdoors when there are less than 2,500 people. Partially vaccinated and non-vaccinated residents were still required to wear masks and remain at least 3 feet from others while outside and inside public places. This came shortly after the CDC released new guidelines stating fully vaccinated residents can resume activities without wearing a mask or physically distancing.

Hours after Austin-Travis County issued its updated masking rules, Governor Abbott issued his competing Executive Order, stating that "Texans, not government, should decide their best health practices." Although the State and Austin-Travis County officials have been at odds about how to handle the COVID-19 pandemic, the Austin-Travis County health authority issued a [Notice of Withdrawal and Transition to Guidance](#) on May 21, 2021, in line with the Executive Order. Now, Austin-Travis County businesses can choose whether to require masks in their establishments. The Austin-Travis County health authority still recommends but does not require that partially-vaccinated and unvaccinated people wear masks in most situations.

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