Masks Required in Certain Boston Workplaces Effective August 27, 2021

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Effective tomorrow (August 27th), individuals must wear masks in all of Boston's indoor public settings. As the City of Boston explained in its August 20th "Order Requiring Face Coverings in the City of Boston," the mask mandate is intended to address rising COVID-19 numbers and the enhanced threat posed by the Delta Variant.

Face masks may be removed while actively eating or drinking, but must be worn for all other activities. Importantly, this mandate excludes children under the age of three and does not apply to private workspaces that are inaccessible to the public. Workspaces considered "open to the public" include, but are not limited to, restaurants, retail establishments, gyms and indoor fitness centers, performance spaces and theaters, museums, cultural and historical sites, and municipal buildings.

Boston is far from the first locality to implement a mask mandate: Billerica, Brookline, Watertown, Lexington, Arlington, Somerville, Belmont, Salem, Provincetown, and Nantucket (among others) have already announced indoor mask mandates and other Massachusetts towns, including Newton, are actively considering similar restrictions.

Employers should keep abreast of mask mandates that may impact their workplaces and update their COVID-19 policies accordingly. All policies should include legally-required exceptions for religious and disability-related accommodations. Even in the absence of an applicable mask mandate, employers should continue to apply preventive measures and consider masking recommendations from other sources, including the CDC and OSHA.

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