Businesses and workers

What are the requirements for face coverings at work?

Generally, workers are required to wear a face covering at all times when indoors, when outdoors in situations where social distancing cannot be maintained, or when specific industry guidance has stricter requirements. Please see the Stay Safe Guidance for Businesses and Organizations to find information about specific work industries. Industry-specific requirements that differ from or impose greater requirements than the Executive Order are also summarized at Face Covering Requirements and Recommendations under Executive Order 20-81. Businesses are responsible for clearly communicating the applicable requirements to their workers.

The Executive Order also identifies a number of situations where a face covering may be temporarily removed, such as when a worker is working alone (for example, when in a closed office, a cubicle with walls above face height when social distancing is maintained, or other enclosed space with no other individuals present). In addition, if a worker cannot wear a face covering due to a medical condition, mental health condition, or disability, a business must provide an accommodation to the worker if possible.

Schools and child care settings

What are the requirements for schools?

Face coverings are generally required for all students, staff and other people present in any kindergarten through grade 12 school buildings or district offices or riding on school transportation vehicles. To provide a consistent, safe environment for students and staff, this requirement applies equally to kindergarteners, even those aged 5 or under. Students and staff have increased flexibility to wear face shields in certain circumstances, all of which are detailed in the Executive Order found at Executive Orders from Governor Walz and 2020-2021 Planning Guide for Schools (PDF). As with other settings, children under 2 years or anyone with a medical, developmental, or behavioral condition that makes it unreasonable to wear a face covering must not wear face coverings.

What are the requirements for child care, preschool and pre-kindergarten?

Universal masking is challenging in child care settings—particularly those that serve young children—due to the importance of communication for child development. These settings also may be able to mitigate risks of transmission by grouping staff and children together in consistent “cohorts” that do not mix with others. Accordingly, the Executive Order grants flexibility to the following child care settings, as long as they serve children 5 and under: family and group day care homes (licensed under Minnesota Rules 2019, chapter 9502); child care centers (licensed under Minnesota Rules 2019, chapter 9503); certified centers (certified under Minnesota Statutes 2019, chapter 245H); legal non-licensed child care providers (defined under Minnesota Statutes 2019, section 119B, subdivision 16); certain license-exempt Head Start, public and private school programs (defined under Minnesota Statutes 2019, section 245A.03, subdivision 2 (a) (5), (13), and (26)); and other Head Start, preschool and pre-kindergarten programs.

In general, either a face covering or face shield is required for all staff in child care settings when in communal areas, hallways or lobbies. When isolated in a classroom or home care environment with one group or cohort, face coverings are strongly recommended, but not required. Children 5 years and under are exempt from the face covering requirement, and a child care setting that serves children under 5 may choose to exempt older children by fulfilling specific requirements (i.e. written notice to all families and documentation in COVID-19 Preparedness Plans). For additional requirements, guidance, and information, please refer to the Executive Order at Executive Orders from Governor Walz and MDH guidance on COVID-19 Prevention Guidance for Youth, Student, and Child Care Programs (PDF).

Guidance for K-12 School Administrators on the Use of Cloth Face Coverings in Schools

Updated July 23, 2020

CDC suggests that all school reopening plans address adherence to behaviors that prevent the spread of COVID-19. When used consistently and correctly, important mitigation strategies, cloth face coverings are important to help slow the spread of COVID-19. Other important mitigation strategies include social distancing, washing hands, and regular cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces in schools and buses. CDC provides considerations for wearing cloth face coverings and recommends that people wear cloth face coverings in public settings and when around people who live outside of their household. The use of cloth face coverings is especially important when social distancing is difficult to maintain.

Cloth face coverings are recommended as a simple barrier to help prevent respiratory droplets from traveling into the air and onto other people when the person wearing the cloth face covering coughs, sneezes, talks, or raises their voice. Cloth face coverings are an example of source control. Several studies[1-13] have documented asymptomatic and pre-symptomatic SARS-CoV-2 transmission; meaning that people with COVID-19 who never develop symptoms (asymptomatic) and those who are not yet showing symptoms (pre-symptomatic) can still transmit the virus to other people. Cloth face coverings are meant to protect other people in case the wearer is unknowingly infected. Cloth face coverings are not personal protective equipment, such as surgical masks or respirators.

The use of cloth face coverings in educational settings may present challenges, particularly for younger students and students with special healthcare or educational needs. This document provides guidance to help school administrators decide how to best implement the wearing of cloth face coverings — in their school settings and facilities, including but not limited to buses and other shared transportation.

Education and promotion of positive and supportive relationships should remain the primary focus of school administrators, teachers, and staff. This

guidance provides K-12 school administrators with strategies to encourage students to wear face coverings, consistent with CDC guidance, while maintaining a positive learning environment.

General Considerations

COVID-19 can be spread to others even if you do not feel sick. A cloth face covering helps prevent a person who is sick from spreading the virus to others. Appropriate and consistent use of cloth face coverings is most important when students, teachers, and staff are indoors and when social distancing of at least 6 feet is difficult to implement or maintain.

Cloth face coverings should **not** be placed on:

- Children younger than 2 years old.
- Anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious.
- Anyone who is incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the cloth face covering without assistance.

Appropriate and consistent use of cloth face coverings may be challenging for some students, teachers, and staff, including:

- Younger students, such as those in early elementary school.
- Students, teachers, and staff with severe asthma or other breathing difficulties.
- Students, teachers, and staff with special educational or healthcare needs, including intellectual and developmental disabilities, mental health conditions, and sensory concerns or tactile sensitivity.

While cloth face coverings are strongly encouraged to reduce the spread of COVID-19, CDC recognizes there are specific instances when wearing a cloth face covering may not be feasible. In these instances, parents, guardians, caregivers, teachers, and school administrators should consider adaptations and alternatives whenever possible. They may need to consult with healthcare providers for advice about wearing cloth face coverings.

Consider use of clear face coverings that cover the nose and wrap securely around the face by some teachers and staff. Clear face coverings should be

determined not to cause any breathing difficulties or over heating for the wearer. Teachers and staff who may consider using clear face coverings include;

- Those who interact with students or staff who are deaf or hard of hearing, per the Individuals with Disabilities Education Actexternal icon
- Teachers of young students learning to read
- Teachers of students in English as a second language classes
- Teachers of students with disabilities

Clear face coverings are not face shields. CDC does **not** recommend use of face shields for normal everyday activities or as a substitute for cloth face coverings because of a lack of evidence of their effectiveness for source control.

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/cloth-face-cover.html

Preparing K-12 School Administrators for a Safe Return to School in Fall 2020

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/prepare-safe-return.html