



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
Robert R. Neall, Secretary

STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Guidance for Use of Cloth Face Coverings in Schools

August 4, 2020

This guidance is being provided by the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) and Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to assist schools to develop and implement policy regarding the use of cloth face coverings in the school setting. The use of cloth face coverings is not a substitute for other SARS-CoV-2 mitigation strategies such as physical distancing, frequent hand washing, and cleaning of frequently touched surfaces within the school setting.

Cloth face coverings protect others if the wearer is infected with SARS CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, and is not aware. Cloth face coverings may offer some level of protection for the wearer. Evidence continues to mount on the importance of universal face coverings in interrupting the spread of SARS-CoV-2. To prevent the spread of SARS CoV-2, the CDC recommends the use of cloth face coverings in schools when feasible.

Use of Cloth Face Coverings in Staff and Students

MDH/MSDE requires the following:

- School staff must wear cloth face coverings while in the school building, on school grounds when not contraindicated due to a medical condition, intellectual or developmental disabilities, or other conditions or safety concerns;
- All students age 5 years and above, school staff, and bus drivers must wear a cloth face covering while on school bus when not contraindicated due to a medical condition or developmental or safety considerations;
- Other adults must wear cloth face coverings when they must enter the school building or grounds for essential functions;
- Students age 5 years and above, especially students in middle and high school, must wear cloth face coverings in the school building and on school grounds when not contraindicated due to a medical condition or developmental or safety considerations;
- The use of cloth face coverings is recommended for pre-kindergarten students below age 5 years on the school bus, in the school building and on school grounds when not contraindicated due to a medical condition or developmental or safety considerations and should be guided by the “Guidance for Use of Cloth Face Coverings in Child Care Programs”;

- The use of cloth face coverings is most important at times when physical distancing measures cannot be effectively implemented especially when indoors;
- Local education agencies should examine the structure and schedule of the education program to identify when physical distancing may be a challenge;
- **Cloth face coverings should not be worn by children under 2 years and anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove a face covering without assistance.**

Communication

- School systems should provide resources to families regarding the importance and expectation for the use of cloth face covering in school;
- Information should be provided to staff, students and students' families regarding the school system expectation of parents to provide cloth face covering or whether the school will provide them;
- School staff and families should teach and reinforce proper use and removal of cloth face coverings, including the use of behavioral strategies as necessary to assist students with becoming comfortable wearing cloth face coverings; and
- Information should be provided to staff, students, and students' families on proper use, removal, and washing of cloth face coverings.