



Baltimore County Public Schools

Face Covering Guidelines

One of Baltimore County Public Schools' (BCPS) highest priorities is to ensure the health and safety of its community including employees, students, and the public. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Maryland Department of Health (MDOH), and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) advise that people who may be infected with COVID-19 (whether asymptomatic, symptomatic or pre-symptomatic) play an important part in reducing community spread. The use of face coverings by everyone can limit the release of infected droplets when talking, coughing, and/or sneezing.

- 1. GENERAL GUIDELINES:** Subject to the exceptions set forth below, each student, employee, visitor, vendor, or other person is always required to properly wear a face covering while at or inside a school/facility, school bus, or other vehicle owned, leased or operated by the Board of Education. **Properly wearing a face covering requires the person to cover both the nose and mouth with a face covering that fits snugly on the person's face without large gaps. A face covering may be factory made or hand sewn and must be appropriate for school. It should not have a valve.**

A. EXCEPTIONS: Face coverings will not be required in the following instances:

- I. For All (Students, employees, vendors, and visitors):**
 - a. Infants:** A face covering shall not be required for persons younger than two (2) years of age;
 - b. Persons with Disabilities:** A face covering shall not be required for persons who are unable to remove it independently, or who are developmentally unable based upon the cognitive, sensory, and/or adaptive needs as outlined on a student's existing Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 plan;
 - c. Identification:** Administrators, security staff, and other appropriate employees may ask someone to briefly remove their face covering to verify their identity. Physical distance will be observed during these requests, whenever possible.

II. For Students:

- a. **Regularly Scheduled Mealtimes:** A face covering shall not be required for any person inside or outside a school district facility while such person is eating during a planned mealtime;
- b. **Strenuous Physical Activity:** A face covering shall not be required for any student of any BCPS owned or operated building or facility while the student is engaged in strenuous physical activity provided that the student is outside and maintains physical distancing (six (6) feet minimum) from other persons;
- c. **During Receipt of Health Care:** A face covering shall not be required for any student inside or outside any BCPS owned or operated building or vehicle when removal of the face covering is necessary for the student to receive health care or to undergo a health care examination from authorized health care personnel; or,
- d. **Brief Mask Break:** A face covering shall not be required for any students inside or outside of a BCPS facility if the student requires a brief face covering break and is able to maintain a 6-foot physical distance from other persons;
- e. **Medical Certification:** A face covering shall not be required for students who have a bona fide medical or physical contraindication that prevents the student from being able to safely wear a face covering. In these circumstances, the parent/guardian of the student may submit medical documentation of the need for the exemption from a health care provider to the Office of Health Services;
- f. **Demanding Circumstances:** A face covering will not be required if a student is experiencing acute trouble breathing, is unconscious or incapacitated, or is personally unable to remove the face covering without assistance.

III. For Employees:

- a. **Alone in Private Workspace:** A face covering shall not be required when an employee is alone in a private workspace, such as an office, county-owned vehicle cubicle, or classroom. If another employee or student is present, the employee must immediately don a face covering.
- b. **Employees with Supervisor's Approval:** A face covering shall not be required when the school system official supervising an employee authorizes the employee to remove their face covering when wearing a face covering would create a safety risk to the person as determined by local, state, or federal regulators or workplace safety guidelines. If this occurs, the employee must maintain physical distancing (six (6) feet minimum) from other persons;
- c. **Regularly Scheduled Mealtimes:** A face covering shall not be required for any employee inside or outside a BCPS owned building or vehicle while the employee is eating during a planned break or mealtime provided that the employee maintains physical distancing (six (6) feet minimum) from other persons when not wearing a face covering;

- d. **Strenuous Physical Activity:** A face covering shall not be required for any employee inside or outside of any school district facility or building while such person is engaged in strenuous physical activity provided that the employee maintains physical distancing (six (6) feet minimum) from other persons when not wearing a face covering;
- e. **Demanding Circumstances:** A face covering will not be required if a person is experiencing acute trouble breathing, is unconscious or incapacitated, or is personally unable to remove the face covering without assistance.

B. FACE COVERING TYPES (students, employees, vendors and visitors): All students, employees, visitors and vendors must supply and wear their own face coverings while at or inside a BCPS owned building or vehicle. The following face covering types are approved for compliance with these guidelines:

- I. **Commercially Produced Face Coverings:** Commercially produced surgical masks or respirators are acceptable for compliance with these guidelines;
- II. **Cloth Face Coverings:** Cloth face coverings are acceptable for compliance with these guidelines provided that the face covering covers both the nose and mouth of the person and fits snugly on the person's face without large gaps. The U.S. Center for Disease Control has issued instructions on how to make a cloth face covering at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/how-to-make-cloth-face-covering.html>
- III. The face covering may not have a valve.

2. LIMITATIONS/ENFORCEMENT: NO STUDENT or EMPLOYEE shall wear a mask that violates Board Policy and Superintendent's Rule. Consistent with Policy and Rule 5220, students will not wear facemasks that are disruptive to the school environment, that promote illegal or harmful activities or that could endanger the health and safety of the student or other students, which includes but is not limited to that which:

- A. PROHIBITED FACE MASK TYPES:**
 - I. Depicts messages that are lewd, vulgar, obscene, plainly offensive, violent, sexually explicit or that reference items that are illegal in general or illegal specifically for underage students;
 - II. Promotes use of tobacco, drugs, alcohol or other illegal or harmful products;
 - III. Contains sexually suggestive messages;
 - IV. Depicts gang affiliation;

- V. Causes or is likely to cause a substantial or material disruption to school activities or the orderly and safe operation of the school or at school-sponsored activities; and/or
- VI. Contains rude, disrespectful or discourteous expressions inconsistent with civil discourse and behavior.

B. EMPLOYEES: All employees are expected to comply with the face covering requirements above for the health and safety of themselves, their colleagues, students, and others. Employees who do not comply should be reminded of these guidelines. If they refuse to comply after being reminded, the employee may be disciplined according to their respective Collective Bargaining Agreement or other School Board Policies.

C. STUDENTS: All students are expected to follow face covering requirements while in school or school sponsored activities/events for the health and safety of themselves, school staff, and others. Students who do not comply should be reminded of these guidelines and provided with a face covering if needed. In addition, the following steps will be implemented when students violate safety guidelines:

Level I Response I- Initial Intervention:

- Discuss rationale for non-compliance with student.
- Re-direct student to wear face covering and/or wear it appropriately.
- Review face covering protocol with student.
- Provide pamphlet regarding COVID-19.

Level II Response-Repeated or Persistent Violation Violation:

- Provide written warning to student as appropriate.
- Re-direct student to wear face covering appropriately.
- Contact parent/guardian. Discuss concerns regarding face covering policy.

Level III Response III-Repeated Violation:

- Suspension from school
- Required parent conference (in-person or virtual) to discuss safety and
 - discipline concern of student.
- Review face covering protocols with student.
- Student and parent
- Provide Face Covering FAQ

Students may be subject to *short-term suspension* for direct and deliberate disruption and refusal to wear a mask based on the given school protocol after repeatedly disregarding *Step I-III*.

Virtual learning shall be made available for students to access if a suspension is recommended.

D. VISITORS: Members of the public and visitors should be reminded that face coverings are required while at or inside a BCPS owned or operated building or vehicle. A visitor will not be admitted to a BCPS owned or operated building or vehicle without wearing a face covering.