



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 are infected with COVID-19 are contagious even when symptoms are not present. The use of face coverings by everyone protects others by limiting the release of infected droplets when talking, coughing, and/or sneezing and protects the wearer by providing filtration of air that is inhaled.

- 1. GENERAL GUIDELINES:** Subject to the exceptions set forth below, each student, employee, visitor, vendor, or other person, regardless of vaccination status, is required to properly wear a face covering while inside a school building and while on a school bus. **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. Infants:** A face covering shall not be required for persons younger than two (2) years of age.
- II. 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.
- III. Students with 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.

- IV. **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 face covering would create a safety risk (such as danger of entanglement in a machine) to the person as determined by local, state, and/or federal regulators or safety guidelines.
- V. **Demanding Circumstances:** A face covering will not be required if a student or staff member is experiencing acute trouble breathing, is unconscious or incapacitated, or is personally unable to remove the face covering without assistance.
- VI. **Alone in a Private Space:** A face covering will not be required if a person is alone in a private space.
- VII. **Regularly Scheduled Meals and Hydration Breaks:** A face covering will not be required while a person is eating during a planned mealtime and may be briefly removed for hydration purposes. The face covering should be replaced as soon as possible. Persons should maintain maximal physical distancing during meals and hydration breaks.

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.
- 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.
- VI.** Contains rude, disrespectful or discourteous expressions inconsistent with civil discourse and behavior.
- VII.** Contains language and/or displays images, symbols, materials, and/or other items that promote hatred, racial or ethnic violence or intimidation, or swastikas, the confederate flag and/or nooses.

B. EMPLOYEES: All employees are expected to comply with the face covering requirements outlined 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 and at school-sponsored activities or events outlined above for the health and

safety of themselves, their colleagues, students 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:

Initial Violation:

- 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 [Face Covering FAQ](#).

Repeated or Persistent 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.
- Provide a reminder and review of school safety and the face covering protocol.
- Provide [Face Covering FAQ](#).

Deliberate Non-Compliance:

- Required parent conference (in-person or virtual) to discuss safety concerns around student's non-compliance.
- Review face covering protocols with student and parent/guardian.
- Provide [Face Covering FAQ](#).

When a student is deliberately non-compliant with wearing a mask after being warned repeated to do so:

- Students shall be charged with violating Board of Education Policy/Superintendent's Rule 5500 and issued a short-term suspension Category I-L and Category I-Q charges shall be listed as the applicable violations (refusing to cooperate with school rules and/or regulations and knowingly using his or her state of health to threaten the health of others.) Refusing to wear a mask constitutes an imminent threat or serious harm.

- For students who continue to be non-compliant after a short-term suspension, a long-term or extended suspension is applicable using category I-L and I-Q charges.

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