

Mask Wearing

In-Person Learning Resources for Parents and Caregivers at Chicago Public Schools — A Resource Created by Healthy Schools Campaign for Parents and Caregivers in Chicago Public Schools

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Mask Wearing

COVID-19 is primarily spread through respiratory droplets and smaller aerosols, which are transmitted through the air when people breathe, talk, cough and sneeze. Masks can limit the spread of droplets and smaller aerosols. This is called “source control.” Masks can also help protect their wearers against COVID-19.

What Experts Say

Schools should require masks for all students and staff, for everyone who is on school property at all times.

Recommendations from experts include:

- Schools should have plans to enforce mask wearing on campus and on buses.
- Students, families and staff should be trained on how to wear and care for masks, and which masks are effective.
- If there are concerns about a parent, student, or teacher’s ability to obtain and care for a mask, the school should make them available to everyone.
- “Masks breaks” throughout the day may be scheduled during times when transmission risk is relatively lower, such as quiet reading time or outdoor recess.
- Masks should be two or more layers of washable, breathable fabric. Masks should cover the nose and mouth and fit snugly on the face without gaps.
- Face shields are not recommended as a substitute for masks.
- Plexiglass shields may be used in reception desk areas, the cafeteria cashier or between the teacher and class. Even when plexiglass shields are in place, everyone should wear masks.
- Change a mask when it becomes wet (from breathing, snow or other precipitation). A wet mask is less efficient and harder to breathe through. Reusable masks should be placed in a sealed plastic bag until they can be washed at home.
- Scarves and ski masks used for warmth are not suitable for use as masks to prevent spread of COVID-19. They may be worn over a mask.

What CPS Says

Anyone over the age of two is required to wear a face covering on school grounds. To support this effort, the district has purchased three reusable face coverings for each student and staff member. The district will also distribute disposable masks for emergency use.

Face shields are not acceptable for students unless they have a documented medical reason that is approved by the district. Parents and caregivers may supply children with their own cloth face coverings as long as it covers the child’s nose and mouth and has at least two layers. Students with certain medical conditions can apply for a mask exemption.

Every school will have face masks for all staff members. Staff members who provide personal, one-on-one support for students will receive a face shield. A face shield should only be worn in addition to a mask.

Parents and Caregivers Should Know

CPS has a thorough policy of mask-wearing and plans to provide masks for any staff members or students who do not have a mask. You may still have questions about the enforcement of mask wearing, certain exceptions and how to ensure the mask you provide for your student is effective. Consider asking the following questions of your school leaders:

- How will teachers monitor proper mask wearing among their students?
- Will masks be provided if a student loses their mask or a mask becomes broken?

- What if a student in my child's class has a mask-wearing exception? Will I be notified and what options will I have? Will accommodations be made to ensure my child is protected?
- What is the protocol for mask handling before and after meals as well as during recess?

The best practices in this document are based on guidelines provided by the Harvard [T.H. Chan School of Public Health](#) and the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).