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Frequently Asked Questions¹ Use of Face Coverings at School

General Questions

1. Is there a statewide order requiring face coverings in California?

Yes. On June 18, 2020, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) issued statewide [Guidance for the Use of Face Coverings](#) that requires all people in California to wear face coverings in certain high-risk situations such as inside any public space and when engaged in work. The Guidance provides a few exemptions to the face covering requirement based on age, disability and other factors that are addressed in questions herein.

2. Is there face covering guidance specifically for schools and school-based programs?

Yes. CDPH issued [COVID-19 Industry Guidance: Schools and School-Based Programs](#) (“CDPH School Guidance”) that also addresses the use of face coverings in the school setting. CDPH School Guidance requires face coverings, unless otherwise exempt, in the school setting in accordance with CDPH’s statewide [Guidance for the Use of Face Coverings](#). Schools are required to follow both of CDPH’s guidance documents. CDPH’s School Guidance notes that face coverings are particularly important in indoor environments, on school buses, and areas where physical distancing alone is not sufficient to prevent disease transmission.

3. Are school districts required to follow guidance issued by CDPH?

Yes. The Governor has ordered, in multiple [executive orders](#), that all California residents heed the guidance and directives of the state public health officer. Government Code section [8665](#) provides that any person who violates or who refuses or willfully neglects to obey an Executive Order shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and on conviction shall be punishable by a fine. See [CDPH Schools Guidance FAQ](#).

¹ This guidance will be updated periodically based on new information and updates to existing guidance from CDC, CDPH and local health authorities.

4. Are there any Local Health Officer Orders in Orange County requiring the use of face covering?

Yes. On September 8, 2020, the Orange County Local Health Officer issued an [Order](#) requiring that all Orange County residents and visitors use face coverings in high-risk situations as directed in CDPH's [Guidance for Use of Face Coverings](#).

5. What are considered high-risk situations that require people in California to wear face coverings?

As it relates to the school setting, CDPH identifies the following high-risk situations where people **must** wear face coverings:² (1) inside of, or in line to enter, any indoor public space;³ (2) while engaged in work, whether at the workplace or performing work off site;⁴ and (3) while outdoors in public spaces when maintaining a physical distance of 6 feet from persons who are not members of the same household or residence is not feasible. For further discussion, please see FAQ sections below specifically for students and school employees.

6. Are some people exempt from the Statewide Face Covering Order?

Yes. Generally speaking, CDPH exempts the following individuals from wearing face coverings in California:

- Persons younger than two years old;
- Persons with a medical condition, mental health condition, or disability that prevents wearing a face covering;
- Persons who are hearing impaired, or communicating with a person who is hearing impaired, where the ability to see the mouth is essential for communication;
- Persons for whom wearing a face covering would create a risk to the person related to their work, as determined by local, state, or federal regulators or workplace safety guidelines;
- Persons who are seated at a restaurant or other establishment that offers food or beverage service, while they are eating or drinking, provided that they are able to maintain a distance of at least 6 feet away from persons who are not members of the same household or residence;
- Persons who are engaged in outdoor work or recreation such as swimming, walking, hiking, bicycling, or running, when alone or with household members, and when they are able to maintain a distance of at least 6 feet from others.

² CDPH also requires face coverings in the following situations that are not relevant in the school setting: (1) Obtaining services from the healthcare sector in settings including, but not limited to, a hospital, pharmacy, medical clinic, laboratory, physician or dental office, veterinary clinic, or blood bank; (2) Waiting for or riding on public transportation or paratransit or while in a taxi, private car service, or ride-sharing vehicle; and (3) Driving or operating any public transportation or paratransit vehicle, taxi, or private car service or ride-sharing a vehicle when passengers are present.

³ Unless exempt by state guidance for specific public setting.

⁴ Please see the FAQ section specific to the school employees for a more information.

CDPH notes that persons exempted from wearing a face covering due to a medical condition who are employed in a job involving regular contact with others should wear a non-restrictive alternative, such as a face shield with a drape on the bottom edge, as long as their condition permits it.

7. What is a cloth face covering?

According to [CDPH Guidance for Use of Face Coverings](#), a [cloth face covering](#) is a material that covers the nose and mouth. It can be secured to the head with ties or straps or simply wrapped around the lower face. It can be made of a variety of materials, such as cotton, silk, or linen. A cloth face covering may be factory-made or sewn by hand, or can be improvised from household items such as scarfs, T-shirts, sweatshirts, or towels.

8. What is the purpose for wearing a cloth face covering?

CDPH reports there is scientific evidence to suggest that use of cloth face coverings by the public during a pandemic could help reduce disease transmission. Their primary role is to reduce the release of infectious particles into the air when someone speaks, coughs, or sneezes, including someone who may have COVID-19 but feels well (i.e., asymptomatic). Cloth face coverings are **not** a substitute for physical distancing, washing hands, and staying home when ill, but they may be helpful when combined with these primary interventions. [CDPH's Guidance for Use of Face Coverings](#).

9. Are face shields considered face coverings?

No. According to the CDC, a face shield is primarily used for eye protection for the person wearing it. At this time, it is not known what level of protection a face shield provides to people nearby from the spray of respiratory droplets from the wearer. There is currently not enough evidence to support the effectiveness of face shields for source control. Therefore, CDC **does not recommend** the use of face shields as a substitute for cloth face coverings. However, in very narrow circumstances, discussed below, a face shield can be used. See the [CDC Considerations For Wearing Masks](#)

10. How do I care for a cloth face covering?

[CDPH's Guidance for Use of Face Coverings](#) recommends washing your cloth face covering frequently, ideally after each use, or at least daily. Keep cloth face coverings in a bag or bin until they can be laundered with detergent and hot water and dried on a hot cycle. If you must re-wear your cloth face covering before washing, wash your hands immediately after putting it back on and avoid touching your face. Discard cloth face coverings that: no longer cover the nose and mouth; have stretched out or damaged ties or straps; cannot stay on the face; or have holes or tears in the fabric.

Students

1. Are students required to follow CDPH's statewide face covering requirement while at school or a school-related activity?

Yes. Students in California are required to wear face coverings at school pursuant to [CDPH's Guidance for Use of Face Coverings](#), unless the student is specifically exempt from the face covering requirements. [CDPH's Guidance for Schools](#) provides a few exemptions to the face covering requirements in the school setting, which are discussed herein.

2. Are students in 3rd grade and above required to wear face coverings at school?

Yes. [CDPH's Guidance for Schools](#) requires that students in 3rd grade and above wear face coverings while at school or at a school-related activity, unless the student is exempt from the face covering requirement. CDPH notes that face coverings are particularly required in indoor environments, on school buses, and in areas where physical distancing alone is not sufficient to prevent disease transmission. CDPH's recommendations for use of face coverings at school are consistent with the [CDC Guidance for K-12 Administrators on the Use of Cloth Face Coverings in Schools](#).

3. Are students in 2nd grade and below, including preschool, required to wear face coverings at school?

No. For students 2 years old through 2nd grade, CDPH's Guidance strongly encourages but does not require that students in this age cohort wear face coverings at school. However, CDPH's Guidance strongly encourages children between 2 years old and 2nd grade to wear face coverings, if they can be worn properly. For this age group, a face shield is an acceptable alternative for children who cannot wear a face covering properly. (See [CDPH COVID-19 Update Guidance: Child Care Programs and Providers](#)). Although CDPH does not require face coverings for this age cohort, school districts may be more restrictive and require that students in 2nd grade and below wear face coverings or, alternatively, face shields for students that cannot properly wear a face covering.

4. Are children under 2 years required to wear face coverings in the preschool setting?

No. Children under 2 years of age should not wear face coverings.

5. Are schools required to teach and reinforce the use of face coverings?

Yes. CDPH's School Guidance requires that schools teach and reinforce the use of [face coverings](#) (or face shields in limited circumstances) in the school setting. Students and staff should be frequently reminded not to touch the face covering and to [wash hands](#) frequently. Information should be provided to all staff and families in the school community on [proper use, removal, and washing of cloth face coverings](#).

6. Are schools required to provide face coverings for students that do not bring their own face covering?

Yes. If a student arrives at school without a face covering, the school should provide a face covering to the student to prevent unnecessary exclusion from school. Over the summer, the State provided districts a large quantity of face coverings to distribute to students. Students may wear their own face coverings.

7. Are face coverings subject to school dress code policies?

Yes. Face coverings must comply with dress code policies so that they do not disrupt school activities, are not obscene or otherwise inflammatory, and do not endanger the health or safety of students, themselves, or others. As face coverings are becoming more expressive, districts may consider amending their dress code policy to identify any additional or specific limitation on permissible face covering.

8. Are face shields a replacement for a face covering?

No. CDC **does not currently recommend** use of face shields as a substitute for masks. According to the CDC, a face shield is primarily used for eye protection for the person wearing it. At this time, it is not known what level of protection a face shield provides to people nearby from the spray of respiratory droplets from the wearer. There is currently not enough evidence to support the effectiveness of face shields for source control. [CDC Considerations for Wearing Masks](#).

9. Can students wear a face shield instead of a face covering at school?

In limited circumstances, a school may permit a student to wear a face shield instead of a face covering. According to [CDPH's Guidance for Schools](#), students in 2nd grade and below that cannot wear a face covering properly may wear a face shield as an acceptable alternative. CDPH does not provide a face shield alternative for students in 3rd grade through high school. Based on individual circumstances, a student in 3rd grade and above could be permitted to use a face shield instead of a face covering to accommodate a medical condition, mental health condition, or disability that prevents the student from wearing a face covering.

10. Under what circumstances are students permitted to remove their face coverings while at school or a school-related activity?

Generally, students are expected to wear face coverings while at school or a school-related activity in particular when indoors, on a bus, or in areas where physical distancing alone is not sufficient to prevent disease transmission. Students may remove face coverings under the following circumstances:

- For meals, snacks, naptime, or outdoor recreation, or when face covering needs to be replaced.

- When students are outdoors and can maintain 6 feet of separation from others, including any outdoor classroom or educational activity.
- When participating in outdoor physical activity while maintaining 6 feet of physical distance from others.

Teachers and/or school personnel should direct students when it is appropriate to remove a face covering.

11. Should students wear face coverings while indoors when 6 feet of physical distancing can be maintained?

Yes. According to CDPH, face coverings are particularly required in indoor environments, on school buses, and in areas where physical distancing alone is not sufficient to prevent disease transmission. According to CDPH and the Orange County Local Health Officer, students are required to wear face coverings while indoors, including classrooms, even when 6 feet of physical distance can be maintained between students. Because each environment is different, there may be circumstances or additional mitigation measures that could be implemented in indoor spaces. The Orange County Health Care Agency may be consulted to determine whether additional mitigation strategies could be implemented in some indoor spaces. (See [CDC Strategies for Protecting K-12 School Staff from Covid-19.](#))

12. Are students required to wear face coverings when participating in classes or educational activities held outdoors when 6 feet of physical distance is maintained between students and staff?

No. Face coverings would not be required when classes or educational activities are held outside and 6 feet of physical distancing is maintained. Students should put on face coverings when 6 feet of physical distance is not maintained, such as when going to or coming from an outdoor class or educational activity.

13. Do students need to wear face coverings during PE, sports and extracurricular activities when participating in indoor activities?

Yes. According to CDPH Guidance updated on August 3, 2020, youth sports and physical education are permitted only when the following can be maintained: (1) physical distancing of at least 6 feet; and (2) a stable cohort, such as a class, that limits the risks of transmission.⁵ CDPH’s School Guidance requires that cloth face coverings be worn during indoor physical conditioning and training or physical education classes (except when showering). Activities conducted inside should be those that do not require heavy exertion and can be done with a face covering. Students should take a break from exercise if any difficulty in breathing is noted and

⁵ For sports that cannot be conducted with sufficient distancing or cohorting, only physical conditioning and training is permitted and ONLY where physical distancing can be maintained. Conditioning and training should focus on individual skill building (e.g., running drills and body weight resistance training) and should take place outside, where practicable. Indoor physical conditioning and training is allowed only in counties where gyms and fitness centers are allowed to operate indoors.

should change their mask or face covering if it becomes wet and sticks to the player's face and obstructs breathing. CDPH indicates that activities should take place outside to the maximum extent practicable and activities that require heavy exertion should be conducted outside in a physically distanced manner without face coverings.

14. Are students required to wear face coverings during PE, sports and extracurricular activities when participating in outdoor activities and maintaining 6 feet of physical distancing from others?

No. According to CDPH Guidance, youth sports and physical education are permitted only when the following can be maintained: (1) physical distancing of at least 6 feet; and (2) a stable cohort, such as a class, that limits the risks of transmission (see CDC Guidance on Schools and Cohorting). For sports that cannot be conducted with sufficient distancing or cohorting, only physical conditioning and training is permitted and **ONLY** where physical distancing can be maintained. Conditioning and training should focus on individual skill building (e.g., running drills and body weight resistance training) and should take place outside, where practicable.

As long as 6 feet of physical distancing and a stable cohort is consistently maintained, students participating in sports, physical education classes, or conditioning and skill development conducted outdoors would not require a face covering. If students are unable to physically distance or remain in cohorts, face coverings would be required for outdoor sports or physical education classes.

15. What happens if a student arrives on campus without a face covering?

Unless exempt, students in 3rd grade and above must wear a face covering while at school or a school-related activity. Each school should have a supply of disposable face coverings to provide students that arrive on campus without a face covering. Unless exempt, students who refuse to wear a face covering at school should not be permitted to enter campus or remain on campus.

16. What should school staff do if a student is not wearing a face covering at school when a face covering is required?

School staff should frequently remind all students that wearing a face covering at school is important and required. When face coverings are required, school staff should direct students to put on a face covering and provide a disposable face covering, if necessary. If a student indicates he or she is not required to wear a face covering, the school staff should confirm this information with the student's teacher or a school administrator.

If a student repeatedly removes his/her face covering during the school day in violation of the school rules/code of conduct/policy regarding wearing of a face covering, identify any obstacles or concerns the student may have about wearing the face covering (i.e., any harmful or inappropriate behavior toward the student). Work with the teacher to provide appropriate supports to the students, if necessary, to encourage continuous use of the face covering at school.

Students capable of wearing a face covering at school but who repeatedly refuse to do so should be excluded from campus/in-person instruction and be provided educational opportunities through distance learning as discussed in Question 17.

17. What happens when a student refuses to wear a face covering at school?

According to [CDPH's Guidance for Schools](#), schools **must** exclude students from campus if they are not exempt from wearing a face covering and refuse to wear a face covering. The District should work with families to ensure that the student and parents/guardians understand the importance of wearing a face covering at school and the consequences for not wearing a face covering at school. We recommend that schools update behavior expectations, codes of conduct, discipline policies and practices to address the face covering requirement. Students who consistently refuse to wear a face covering at school must be excluded from in-person instruction and provided educational opportunities through distance learning.

18. Are some students exempt from the face covering requirement at school?

Yes. [CDPH's Guidance for Schools](#) indicates that students younger than 2 years old, anyone who has trouble breathing, anyone who is unconscious or incapacitated, and anyone who is otherwise unable to remove the face covering without assistance are exempt from wearing a face covering at school. Further, [CDPH's Guidance for Use of Face Coverings](#) indicates that individuals with a medical condition, mental health condition, or disability that prevents wearing a face covering are exempt from the face covering requirement. This includes persons with a medical condition for whom wearing a face covering could obstruct breathing and persons who are hearing impaired, where the ability to see the mouth is essential for communication.

19. How should a school respond if a student requests an exemption?

The CDPH and CDC guidance recognizes that wearing face coverings may not be possible in every situation or for some people. We recommend that schools identify personnel, including a case carrier for a student with an IEP or Section 504 Plan, and/or a school nurse if available, and a school administrator that will respond to requests for an exemption of the face covering requirement. If the student has an individualized health plan, an IEP or 504 Plan with an identified disability that obviously prevents the student from wearing a face covering, this should be documented in the individualized health plan, student information system (e.g., a notation in Aeries) or student file so that school staff are aware of the student's exemption.

If school staff is not clear whether the student has a disability that obviously prevents the student from wearing a face covering, we recommend that the student's IEP team or Section 504 team discuss the request for an exemption, the specific reason the student is unable to wear a face covering, and consider other reasonable alternatives or accommodations that can be provided for the student. If the team identifies a reasonable alternative to the face covering requirement, we suggest documenting the decision or accommodations in the meeting notes as well as a notation in the student information system or student file so that school staff are aware of the student's accommodations and/or exemption.

If the student does not have an IEP or Section 504 Plan and the parent indicates that the student has a medical condition, mental health condition or disability that prevents the student from wearing a face covering at school, we recommend that the school follow its student intervention process (i.e., success team/student study team (SST) meeting procedures) to discuss the request, the specific reason the student is unable to wear a face covering, and consider other reasonable alternatives or accommodations that can be provided for the student. If the team identifies a reasonable alternative to the face covering requirement, we suggest documenting the decision or accommodations in the meeting notes and in the student's record which may include an individual health plan or in the student information system. The team should also follow the child find procedures, as necessary, should the student have a suspected disability.

20. Are there alternatives to a face covering requirement for students that may be exempt?

Yes. In addressing a request for an exemption to the face covering requirement, a school site team should discuss with the family the specific reasons preventing the student from wearing a face covering at school. During the discussion, the team should consider the unique needs of the student and other reasonable alternatives that can be implemented to accommodate the student while maintaining the safety of other students and staff on campus. Accommodations and alternatives should be considered whenever possible to increase the feasibility of wearing a face covering at school. The following is a non-exhaustive list of alternatives that could be considered:

- Providing student reasonable breaks from wearing a face covering when the student can maintain a physical distance of 6 feet.
- Provide reasonable breaks to allow the student to go outside to remove the face covering.
- Prioritize the times and situations when student will wear the face covering so that the face covering is worn during higher risk situations such as entering and leaving campus, while walking on campus, and when 6 feet of distance cannot be maintained.
- Develop and reinforce specific strategies to increase the time student can wear a face covering.
- Consider modifying the student's environment to ensure that the student maintains 6 feet of distance between teachers and peers. Modifications could include:
 - Locate student closest to door and at least 6 feet from other students.
 - Provide designated area for student that is separated from others by a plexiglass partition.
- Modify schedules so that student does not leave the classroom during passing period or come into contact with other students without wearing a face covering.
- Provide additional supervision during passing periods, recess, lunch, or at other times to ensure that student maintains 6 feet of social distancing from peers.
- Ensuring proper mask size and fit, and provide student with frequent reminders and education on the importance and proper wear of masks that may help address these issues.

- Consider wearing a nonrestrictive alternative such as a face shield with a drape on the bottom edge.

21. Can a school require medical documentation to support the student’s request for an exemption from wearing a face covering due to a medical condition, mental health condition, or disability?

Yes. A district may require that a student submit medical documentation that the student is unable to wear a face covering due to a medical condition, mental health condition or a disability. This is consistent with other medical documentation that schools can require. A school site team should consider a doctor’s note indicating an exemption from the face covering requirement. If the doctor’s note is not clear, the team can request additional information or request consent from the parent to discuss with the doctor the request for an exemption and any reasonable alternatives that can be implemented. If the parent provides medical documentation, the school team should determine whether the student has a suspected disability warranting a referral per the IEP or Section 504 process.

22. How should a district respond to a family who indicates that a student has difficulty breathing while wearing a face covering?

When worn properly, cloth face coverings are safe and should not cause difficulty breathing. However, if a student has a medical condition, mental health condition, or disability that would cause or contribute to a student having trouble breathing while wearing a face covering, the district should follow the process identified to respond to a request for exemption. (See FAQs #19 and 20).

In an emergency situation when a student is having difficulty breathing, remove student’s face covering and have student maintain a distance of 6 feet from others as much as possible. In such a circumstance, we recommend consulting with the school nurse and/or school administrator and follow-up with a process to determine whether a student can wear a face covering consistently or an alternative as outlined in FAQs # 19 and 20.

23. How will the face covering requirement apply to students with an IEP or Section 504 Plan?

Students with an IEP or Section 504 Plan are required to wear face coverings consistent with their grade level. For the majority of special education students and students with a Section 504 Plan, wearing a face covering should not be an issue. However, for students with more significant disabilities that would interfere with their ability to wear a face covering or for students with special needs or circumstances that may prevent them from consistently wearing a face covering, the student’s IEP team or Section 504 team should meet to review the student’s unique needs regarding the face covering requirement. The IEP or Section 504 team should consider ways to support and reinforce the use of face coverings and/or consider reasonable alternatives to the face covering requirement. Decisions made by the team should be documented in the student’s IEP or Section 504 Plan.

24. Are students who are deaf or hard of hearing exempt from wearing a face covering?

Yes. CDPH's, [CDPH's Guidance for Use of Face Coverings](#) specifically exempts individuals who are hearing impaired where the ability to see the mouth is essential for communication. However, the CDC Guidance encourages the use of a clear face covering that covers the nose and wraps securely around the face. If wearing a clear face covering is not feasible, consider using a face shield that wraps around the sides of the wearer's face and extends below the chin or a hooded face shield is recommended by the CDC. When the student is not communicating, the student should wear a face covering.

25. Should schools develop policies on how to address students who are exempt from wearing a face covering?

Yes. CDPH's School Guidance indicates that schools should provide training on the proper use of face coverings and how people exempted from wearing a face covering will be addressed. CDC's Guidance indicates that stigma, discrimination, or bullying may arise due to wearing or not wearing a face covering and that schools should have a plan to prevent and address harmful or inappropriate behavior. In addition, CDC's Guidance indicates that schools should have a plan to address challenges that may arise regarding school policies about face coverings, and refer parent/guardians to CDC and CDPH guidance on face coverings.

Because an exemption from wearing a face covering should be based on a medical condition, mental health condition, or disability, districts likely already have discrimination and anti-bullying policies and procedures that protect students who would be exempt from the face covering requirement. Some school districts may have adopted policies prior to the CDPH and/or CDC updated guidance. In such a case, we recommend that board policies and/or procedures be regularly reviewed and updated consistent with CDPH and CDC guidance.

26. Are students required to wear face coverings on buses?

Yes. Face coverings are required on buses unless the student is otherwise exempt. CDPH and CDC guidance acknowledge that a full 6 feet of physical distancing may not be practicable on buses, therefore, face coverings are essential. Physical distancing should be maximized to the extent practicable. For students with significant disabilities that are unable to wear a face covering, consider other less restrictive alternatives like a face shield with neck drape or, possibly, an alternative form of transportation. Districts should ensure that buses are equipped with extra unused face coverings for students who may have inadvertently failed to bring one.

27. Can a student that is exempt from wearing a face covering be excluded from in-person instruction at school?

According to CDPH, students with a medical condition, mental health condition, or disability that prevents them from wearing a face covering are exempt from the face covering requirement. Such students are protected from disability-based discrimination and cannot be denied public benefits based on their disability. We do not recommend excluding such students from in-person instruction at school or requiring such students to participate in distance learning only. Please

see FAQ #19 and 20 on how to respond to a request for exemption. With parent agreement, distance learning can be an option for a student that is not able to wear a face covering.

School Employees

1. Are school employees required to wear face coverings?

Yes. Generally speaking, CDPH's [Guidance for Schools](#) requires that all school employees must use face coverings in accordance with CDPH's [Guidance for Use of Face Coverings](#) unless Cal/OSHA standards require greater respiratory protection. There are limited exemptions or exceptions to this general requirement. Under CDPH's Guidance for Use of Face Coverings, school employees are required to wear face coverings under the following circumstances:

- a) When interacting in person with any member of the public;
- b) When working in any space visited by members of the public, regardless of whether anyone from the public is present at the time;
- c) When working in any space where food is prepared or packaged for sale or distribution to others;
- d) When working in or walking through common areas, such as hallways, stairways, elevators, and parking facilities.
- e) In any room or enclosed area where other people (except for members of the person's own household or residence) are present when unable to physically distance.

2. Are employees required to wear face coverings while working in school site offices or district offices that are accessible to the public?

Yes. Districts have been generally limiting the visitors on school campuses and district offices, and encouraging remote services or by appointment only. To the extent possible, we recommend that visitors be limited to the reception area at a school site or district office and that school personnel meet with a visitor in the reception or other designated area. Employees working in areas open to the public are required to wear face coverings at all times. Because each environment is different, there may be circumstances or additional mitigation measures that could be implemented in some indoor spaces such as physical barriers. The Orange County Health Care Agency may be consulted to determine whether additional mitigation strategies could be implemented in some indoor spaces.

3. Under what circumstances may school employees remove a face covering while at work?

CDPH's [Guidance for Use of Face Coverings](#) requires that school employees wear face coverings at work unless the employee is exempt or under specific circumstances where face coverings are not required. CDPH Guidance indicates that school employees may remove a face covering in the following circumstances:

- a) When the school employee is outdoors in public spaces when able to maintain a physical distance of 6 feet from other persons.

- b) When the school employee is working in any room or enclosed area that is not open to members of the public and there are no other employees present.
- c) When the school employee is working in any room or enclosed area where other people are present when the employee is able to maintain a physical distance of 6 feet.
- d) When the school employee is engaged in outdoor work when alone and able to maintain a distance of at least 6 feet from others.

4. Are employees required to wear face coverings while working inside school offices or district offices that are not accessible to the public?

School employees are not required to wear a face covering when working in any room or enclosed area that is not open to members of the public and there are no other employees present. School employees are encouraged but not required to wear a face covering when working in any room or enclosed area where other people are present when the employee is able to maintain a physical distance of 6 feet. If the employee is unable to maintain 6 feet of physical distance, a face covering is required.

5. Are employees required to wear a face covering when participating in a meeting in an enclosed room or area if 6 feet of physical distancing can be maintained by all participants?

No. CDPH Guidance encourages that to the extent possible, meetings should be held through electronic means. However, in-person meetings are permitted as necessary. When participating in an in-person meeting where 6 feet of physical distance can be maintained between participants, employees are encouraged but not required to wear a face covering. However, employees would be required to put on a face covering any time there is less than 6 feet of physical distancing between participants.

6. Are teachers and instructional assistants required to wear face coverings in the classroom?

Yes. CDPH's [Guidance for Schools](#) requires that teachers and other instructional staff wear face coverings while indoors, including in a classroom, when students or others are present. Teachers or instructional assistants may remove a face covering when working alone in a classroom.

7. Under what circumstances are teachers or instructional assistants not required to wear a face covering?

CDPH recognizes that in some situations a face covering cannot be used for pedagogical or developmental reasons, (i.e., communicating with or assisting young children or those with special needs). If a face covering cannot be used for pedagogical reasons, a clear face covering or a face shield can be used instead of a cloth face covering while in the classroom as long as the teacher or other instructional staff maintains physical distance from others, to the extent

practicable. When 6 feet of distancing cannot be maintained, the teacher or instructional staff should put on a face covering, which can be worn under a face shield. When outside the classroom, the teacher and instructional staff must return to wearing a face covering when 6 feet of physical distance cannot be maintained. [CDPH's Guidance for Schools](#) If a face shield is worn in the classroom, the face shield should have a cloth drape on the bottom edge.

8. Are teachers or instructional assistants working with individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing required to wear a face covering?

No. CDPH's Guidance for the Use of Face Coverings specifically exempts individuals who are hearing impaired or communicating with a person who is hearing impaired from wearing a face covering where the ability to see the mouth is essential for communication. However, the CDC Guidance encourages the use of a clear face covering that covers the nose and wraps securely around the face. Individuals exempted from wearing a face covering who are employed in a job involving regular contact with others should wear a non-restrictive alternative such as a face shield with a cloth drape on the bottom edge, as long as their condition permits it.

9. How should a district respond to an employee's request for an exemption from the face covering requirement at work?

As discussed in General Question FAQ #5, CDPH [Guidance for Use of Face Coverings](#) indicates employees with a medical condition, mental health condition, or disability that prevents them from wearing a face covering are exempt. However, CDPH's [Guidance for Use of Face Coverings](#) indicates that persons exempted from wearing a face covering due to a medical condition who are employed in a job involving regular contact with others should wear a non-restrictive alternative such as a face shield with a drape on the bottom edge, as long as their condition permits it. We recommend treating an employee's request for an exemption from the face covering requirement as a request for a reasonable accommodation. We suggest that such requests be directed to the district's human resources department to engage in the employee in the interactive process.

10. What alternatives are there for persons exempt from wearing face covering?

Through the interactive process, districts should consider reasonable alternatives for the face covering requirement. CDPH's [Guidance for Use of Face Coverings](#) indicates that persons exempted from wearing a face covering due to a medical condition who are employed in a job involving regular contact with others should wear a non-restrictive alternative such as a face shield with a drape on the bottom edge, as long as their condition permits it. In responding to such requests, we encourage districts to consider reasonable alternatives to a face covering requirement discussed in Student FAQ # 20 and CDC's [Considerations for Wearing Face Masks](#).

Legal Authority:

California Department of Public Health (CDPH):

- [CDPH Schools Guidance FAQ](#)
- [COVID-19 Industry Guidance: Schools and School-Based Programs](#)
- [Guidance for the Use of Face Coverings](#)
- [CDPH COVID-19 Update Guidance: Child Care Programs and Providers](#)

Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

- [CDC Considerations For Wearing Masks](#)
- [CDC Guidance for K-12 Administrators on the Use of Cloth Face Coverings in Schools](#)
- [Washing Hands Saves Lives](#)
- [Use of cloth face covering](#)
- [CDC Strategies for Protecting K-12 School Staff from Covid-19](#)

Executive Department, State of California

- [Executive Order N-33-20](#)

Orange County Department of Education

- [OC Together](#)

Orange County Health Care Agency (OCHCA)

- OCHCA [Order](#)