

On August 31, 2021, Pennsylvania's Acting Secretary of Health signed an Order requiring face coverings to be worn in all school entities, including school districts, effective Tuesday, September 7, 2021.

**Which school entities are subject to the Acting Secretary of Health's Order?**

The Order applies to all children/students, teachers, staff, and visitors ages 2 years or older while indoors working, attending, or visiting a school entity, regardless of vaccination status.

**How long will masks be required in school entities?**

The Order is effective 12:01 AM on Tuesday, September 7, 2021, and will remain in effect until the Acting Secretary of Health determines the public health risk is sufficiently reduced so that face coverings are no longer necessary as public health tools in school entities. The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) and the Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH) will continue to provide updates as they continue to closely monitor the CDC guidance. The Governor and Secretary of Health will continue to monitor the data that substantiates this August 31, 2021 Order, and will update Pennsylvania schools by Friday, October 1, 2021.

**Are public PK-12 schools required to incorporate this new masking policy into the Health and Safety Plans approved by their governing bodies?**

Although PDE recommends public school entities update their local American Rescue Plan (ARP) Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Health and Safety Plans to reflect the Acting Secretary of Health's August 31, 2021 Order, they are not required to do so. Regardless of whether the Acting Secretary's August 31, 2021 Order is reflected in a school entity's Health and Safety Plan, all school entities must comply with and enforce the Order.

**Are there exceptions to the Acting Secretary of Health's Order?**

All individuals must wear a face covering while in school entities unless they meet one of the exceptions in Section 3 of the Order.

For your reference, we have included Section 3 Exceptions, listed below:

- A. If wearing a face covering while working would create an unsafe condition in which to operate equipment or execute a task as determined by local, state, or federal regulators or workplace safety guidelines.
- B. If wearing a face covering would either cause a medical condition, or exacerbate an existing one, including respiratory issues that impede breathing, a mental health condition or a disability.
- C. When necessary to confirm the individual's identity.
- D. When working alone and isolated from interaction with other people with little or no expectation of in-person interaction
- E. If an individual is communicating or seeking to communicate with someone who is hearing-impaired or has another disability, where the ability to see the mouth is essential for communication.
- F. When the individual is under two (2) years of age.
- G. When an individual is:
  - a. Engaged in an activity that cannot be performed while wearing a mask, such as eating and drinking, or playing an instrument that would be obstructed by the face covering; or

Participating in high intensity aerobic or anerobic activities, including during a physical education class in a well-ventilated location and able to maintain a physical distance of six feet from all other individuals.

**What type of mask complies with this Order?**

The Order requires individuals to wear a "face covering." "Face covering" means covering of the nose and mouth with material that is secured to the head with ties, straps, or loops over the ears or is wrapped around the lower face. A "face covering" can be made of a variety of synthetic or natural fabrics, including cotton, silk or linen. A "face covering" may be factorymade, sewn by hand, or be improvised from household items, including, but not limited to, scarfs, bandanas, t-shirts, sweatshirts, or towels.

**Does a disposable face shield suffice in lieu of a mask?**

Wearing a cloth face covering is best. A disposable face shield is considered an alternative to a face covering and may be worn when wearing a face covering, as defined above, is otherwise not possible.

**Are vaccinated individuals required to wear masks in schools?**

Yes. Due to the circulating and highly contagious Delta variant, the Order applies to all children/students ages 2 years or older, staff, teachers, and visitors when indoors in school entities, regardless of vaccination status and community transmission level.

**Are individuals covered by this Order required to wear a mask outdoors?**

No. The Order does not require face coverings when outdoors. Individuals should follow the most current guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on mask use outdoors.

**Do groups using the school after hours have to follow the face mask order?**

Yes. The Order applies to all activities occurring indoors in the school entity, regardless of when the activity occurs.