

VIRUSES AND FACE COVERINGS

The Woodall School District recognizes the health and safety benefits of facial coverage during virus outbreaks. Viruses like COVID-19 and its variants are transmitted through respiratory particles produced by an infected person who coughs, sneezes, talks, or raises their voice. These particles can land on or be inhaled through the nose or mouth and into the lungs, which causes infection. Masks help prevent people with a contagious virus from spreading the virus. Mask usage is crucial for authorities to curtail infection and communicability of viruses. Proper facial coverage protects healthy individuals from virus exposure and decreases virus-spread rates so medical institutions can help patients when needed.

Because masking practices vary with perceived risk of virus exposure, this policy establishes four different levels of masking to accommodate all risk levels. The District will implement these protocols when, in its sole discretion, masking is warranted or required by federal, state, local and school-specific conditions. At any time, the District may elect a different level of masking from the levels below as appropriate for the then-current conditions. Further, this policy establishes the disciplinary consequences of non-compliance with the District’s masking protocols as well as limited exceptions.

Definitions

The terms “mask” and “facial coverage” mean a cloth face covering or non-surgical medical masks, not a surgical mask or respirator (like an N95 respirator). Respirators are personal protective equipment that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (“CDC”) recommends be reserved for health care providers. Cloth face coverings are not personal protective equipment because they are not designed to protect the wearer; cloth face coverings are designed to shield infected individuals and thus protect others against virus spread.

A “face shield” is transparent hard plastic face covering that is attached to a helmet, hat, or headband that covers the wearer’s eyes, nose, and mouth. Using a face shield is considered a different form of masking and may be appropriate in limited circumstances for some individuals who cannot wear a cloth face covering due to certain medical conditions. Individuals who wish to use a face shield rather than a mask must receive approval by the building principal. In no circumstances will a face shield that does not extend below the chin of the individual be an acceptable masking substitute.

The term “new” means unused and uncontaminated.

The term “wear” means to put the mask over the nose and mouth and secure it under the chin. Under this definition, the mask should fit against the sides of the face and allow the wearer to breathe easily.

Policy

The Board of Education authorizes the Superintendent to determine the level of masking appropriate for the District given the circumstances in the community. The Superintendent shall designate a level of masking consistent with the following:

- **Level 1:** Mask usage is optional for all individuals.
- **Level 2:** All individuals—including students, staff, and visitors—may wear masks while on school premises or while engaged in school-sponsored activities. Though mask usage is optional, the District highly encourages individuals to wear masks. Visitors, including those associated with vendors, must wear masks on school premises.
- **Level 3:** Staff and visitors must wear masks on school premises. Students on school premises or engaged in school-sponsored activities must wear masks in situations where social distancing is unlikely or impossible but may otherwise remove their masks. For example, students must wear masks on school buses and when traveling outside classrooms but may not be required to wear masks in classrooms. Teachers may determine when students are required to wear masks in their classrooms, subject to administrative approval.

- **Level 4:** All individuals—including students, staff, and visitors—must wear masks while on school premises, on school buses, or while engaged in school-sponsored activities.

The Superintendent shall provide notice to the school community about the level of masking that is to be required. When mask wearing is not mandated, individuals who prefer to wear a mask may do so. As warranted under the circumstances, the Superintendent may designate a different level of masking at any time and will provide timely notice of any change in masking level to the school community.

In the event federal, state, or local authorities mandate specific masking requirements, the level of masking selected by the Superintendent shall be consistent with those requirements.

District Mask Provision

The District may provide masks to any individual on school premises; however, the District must provide masks to students who cannot afford their own. The District will decide and provide notice whether individuals who can afford their own masks must furnish them.

The District may elect to provide new masks daily, but it is not required to do so. Because mask availability may become uncertain, daily provision could become impractical.

Individuals may wear masks that are not provided by the District, provided that the designs of such masks comply with the school dress code. Individuals may decline District-provided masks for substitute masks that satisfy this policy and do not otherwise violate school rules.

No individual is permitted to “share” a face mask with another individual on school premises or during school activities.

Proper Mask Care

Masks should be handled properly and cleaned after each use according to the guidelines issued by the CDC. The District recommends the following mask handling procedure to all students and employees:

- A. Handling Procedure:
- i. Always wash hands before and after handling a mask.
 - ii. Do not put the mask around the neck or on the forehead.
 - iii. Limit touching the mask.
 - iv. Handle only by the ear loops or ties.

The District recommends the following mask cleaning procedure:

- A. Cleaning Procedure:
- i. Washing machine procedure: Launder as normal with laundry detergent using the warmest water setting appropriate for the cloth. The mask may be cleaned at the same time as other items.
 - ii. Handwashing Procedure:
 - a. Mix 5 tablespoons (1/3 cup) household bleach¹ per gallon of room temperature water or 4 teaspoons of household bleach per quart of room temperature water.
 - b. Rinse thoroughly with cool or room temperature water.
- B. Drying Procedure:
- i. Drying machine: Use the highest heat setting and leave mask in the dryer until completely dry.
 - ii. Air dry: Lay mask flat and allow to completely dry. If possible, place mask in direct sunlight.

¹ Use a non-expired bleach that is intended for disinfection.

The District recommends the following face shield cleaning procedure:

- A. Cleaning Procedure²:
 - a. Saturate a soft washcloth in water and apply disinfectant soap to the cloth. Work into a lather.
 - b. Rinse the face shield under a stream of water before gently scrubbing the shield with the lathered cloth.
 - c. Rinse the face shield under a stream of water until no soap residue remains.
- B. Drying Procedure:
 - a. Wipe dry with a clean, soft washcloth or napkin.

Exceptions

General Exceptions: Individuals may decline to wear a mask, but take other required precautions, under the following circumstances:

- A. The individual has a pre-existing health condition that would be adversely affected by mask usage and the individual has provided or will provide, within a reasonable period designated by the Superintendent, a health care provider's statement (1) explaining the inability to wear a mask; (2) indicating whether the individual can safely wear a face shield or other protective facial covering; and (3) alternative measures recommended by the health care provider for protecting the individual and those who may have contact with an individual determined to be medically unable to wear a mask or other facial covering;
- B. Sincerely held religious objections to facial covering; or
- C. Strong personal reasons provided by a parent or guardian involving the educational, social and emotional needs of the student.

Individuals deemed unable, for verified reasons, to wear facial covering will be subject to social distancing and other requirements to limit contact with others.

Temporary Exceptions: Individuals may temporarily remove masks when engaging in the following activities³:

- A. A school approved activity in which the location and/or nature of the activity makes it highly impractical and even unsafe to wear a mask (e.g. sports activities);
- B. physical exercise programs;
- C. consumption of food, beverages, and medication; and
- D. other activities as approved by District administration.

District coaches and sponsors shall assist District administrators in determining to what extent masks should be required during school-sponsored activities, given the availability of social distance and practicality of mask-wearing while participating in the activity.

Additionally, in rare situations, the Superintendent may grant an employee a general or temporary exception from wearing a mask when mandated or may grant an appropriate workplace accommodation if wearing a mask substantially impedes the employee from performing a basic function of the employee's job or the mask creates a workplace hazard. For example, an exception may be warranted if during the course of an employee's job duties there is a substantial likelihood that a facial

² Cleansing with another common disinfectant is acceptable; however, the District recommends cleansing with water and soap to help maintain the face shield's anti-fog properties.

³ These activities should be conducted in a manner that maintains appropriate social distance. When a mask is temporarily removed, it should be promptly returned to the face upon the cessation of the activity for which removal was permitted.

mask would catch on fire, catch in machinery, or prevent the employee from seeing or smelling a workplace hazard. An employee who believes their position qualifies for this exception should submit a written request detailing the circumstances warranting the exemption to their building principal or supervisor to present to the Superintendent.

Consequences

Non-compliance with the District’s designated masking procedure may result in disciplinary action or provision of an alternative-education environment.

Employees may receive disciplinary action up to and including termination. Students may receive disciplinary action consistent with the District’s discipline code; however, students will not receive out-of-school suspension unless a student and the student’s parent or guardian refuse other reasonable options extended by the District.

Students’ access to education outweighs disciplinary measures for non-compliance with masking procedures as long as students and parents or legal guardians work cooperatively with District officials to determine an alternative to masking. If a student refuses to wear a mask, the District will contact the student’s parent or guardian. If the student’s parent or guardian supports the student’s refusal and the refusal is not based on medical reasons associated with the student’s physical and mental well-being as confirmed by the student’s health care provider, the student will be subject to the District’s disciplinary procedures applicable to students. In any instance in which a student and the student’s parent refuses masking consistent with District directives, the District must offer a virtual or hybrid education environment. However, if the offer is rejected, the student is subject to the masking procedure and attendant consequences for non-compliance.

Even when masks are required, a student must promptly and fully respond to a request by a teacher or school administrator to remove the mask or other facial covering. Any such request will be made only when deemed necessary by the school representative for ensuring compliance with District rules of conduct or for health-or-safety-related reasons.

If the District elects to modify its masking procedure to afford more protection, the school must provide individuals with reasonable notice. Individuals will not be disciplined for failure to modify mask usage until given notice of the policy modification and reasonable time to adapt.

Impact on Existing District Policies and Rules

Regardless of which masking procedures the District employs, no individual may wear a mask with a design on it which violates the District’s dress code or would substantially disrupt or materially interfere with the educational environment of the school.

References: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): *Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) About Cloth Face Coverings*; CDC: *How to Wear Your Cloth Face Covering*; CDC: *How to Wash Your Cloth Face Covering*; CDC: *Considerations for Wearing Cloth Face Coverings*.

Individuals Medically Unable to Mask – Explanation Required

Employees or students claiming a medical inability to wear a mask for either a limited or extended time must provide a health care provider’s statement that allows school officials to make arrangements for the safety of the individual seeking exemption from the requirement as well as the safety of others.

Pursuant to the District’s masking policy, an individual may decline to wear a mask at school if the following criteria are satisfied:

- A. The individual has a pre-existing health condition that would be adversely affected by mask usage and the individual has provided or will provide, within a reasonable period designated by the Superintendent, a health care provider’s statement (1) explaining the inability to wear a mask; (2) indicating whether the individual can safely wear a face shield or other protective facial covering; and (3) alternative measures recommended by the health care provider for protecting the individual and those who may have contact with an individual determined to be medically unable to wear a mask or other facial covering; or
- B. The individual is having trouble breathing, is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.

Under the masking policy, individuals deemed unable, for verified reasons, to wear facial covering will be subject to strict social distancing and other requirements to limit contact with others. In furtherance of this procedure, the District may consider alternative-protection measures for individuals who claim they cannot wear a facial covering but do not provide a healthcare provider’s verification and recommendation of alternative-protection measures.

Under no circumstances will the District allow employees or students to avoid its masking requirements without implementing an alternative-protection measure(s). **Individuals must provide the District with a healthcare provider’s statement (1) explaining the individual’s inability to wear a mask either for a short or extended period; (2) indicating whether the individual can safely wear a face shield or other protective facial covering; and (3) recommending alternative measures for protecting the individual and others with whom he or she may have contact.**

Such information will allow the District to best accommodate the individual and protect others.

The District must have information regarding the individual’s inability to wear a mask so that it may consider how to offer a safe working and learning environment. If the individual’s healthcare provider does not provide the requested information, the District will base its consideration on the information before it. The District’s goal is to protect the individual who is unable to wear a facial covering and other individuals with whom he or she may have contact; the District will employ alternative-protection measures that achieve this goal.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

By my signature and date below, I acknowledge receipt of the explanation required of my health care provider.

SIGNATURE

DATE