

Mask Order FAQs

Updated 8/21/2020

The Utah Department of Health issued an update to the [state public health order requiring face masks in schools](#) on August 14, 2020. The order is effective immediately and expires on December 31, 2020.

Wearing a face mask AND physical distancing are important to keep our schools as safe as possible from COVID-19. Schools should implement as many prevention strategies as possible in addition to mask requirements, especially in situations where physical distancing is difficult.

These frequently asked questions will be updated as needed.

For more information on masks in schools, please visit:

- COVID-19 School Manual <https://coronavirus.utah.gov/education/school-manual/>
- Making sense of the research on COVID-19 and masks <https://pws.byu.edu/covid-19-and-masks>
- Making sense of the research on COVID-19 and school reopenings <https://pws.byu.edu/making-sense-of-the-research-on-covid-19-and-school-reopenings>
- CDC Schools and Childcare Programs guidelines <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/index.html>

Face masks basics

1. Why is it important to wear a face mask at school?

Studies from around the world show face masks are very effective to reduce the spread of COVID-19¹. To be the most effective, all children, teachers, and employees at a school need to wear face masks.

The virus that causes COVID-19 is mainly spread through droplets that we expel when we breathe, talk, laugh, sing, cough, or sneeze. People can have the virus and not know it because they might not feel sick. A mask prevents the accidental spread of the virus by catching droplets. [See how in this video from the National Institute of Standards and Technology.](#)

2. Are masks safe to wear all day?

Yes. There are many studies that show masks are effective and safe. Only mild and rare side effects have been seen, such as skin irritation, headaches, and general discomfort. There is no evidence that wearing a mask is dangerous and causes hypoxia (low

¹ <https://pws.byu.edu/covid-19-and-masks>

oxygen) or hypercapnia (high carbon dioxide) in healthy individuals, even when multiple masks are layered on top of each other. It is safe for individuals to wear a face mask even if they have a health condition like asthma or allergies. In fact, wearing a surgical mask during exercise has been used as a treatment to reduce exercise-induced asthma². Many children with developmental disabilities have other medical conditions that may place them at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19. Wearing a mask is protective for these children³.

3. Is a cloth face covering the same thing as a face mask?

Yes. A cloth face covering is also called a face mask. A cloth face covering or face mask:

- Covers the nose and mouth without openings that can be seen through
- Is made of synthetic or natural fabrics
- Secures under the chin
- Fits snugly against the nose and sides of the face
- Does not have an exhalation valve or vent

In these FAQs and in the public health order, the term “face masks” is used to mean a cloth face covering.

4. Is a plastic or clear face mask allowed?

Yes, as long as the face mask covers the nose and mouth without openings, secures under the chin, fits snugly against the nose and sides of the face, and does not have an exhalation valve or vent. A plastic or clear face shield is NOT the same thing as a plastic or clear face mask.

5. What is a face shield?

A face shield:

- Covers the entire face
- Protects the eyes of the wearer
- Is made of clear plastic or similar nonpermeable transparent material
- Secures around the top of the head
- Does not secure under the chin
- Does not fit snugly against the nose or sides of the face
- Can be used in conjunction with a mask for enhanced protection

Face shields are not a substitute for face masks.

6. Are neck gaiters, neck fleeces, and bandanas OK to use?

² <https://pws.byu.edu/covid-19-and-masks>

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<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/Cloth-Face-Coverings-for-Children-During-COVID-19.aspx>

The public health order allows neck gaiters, neck fleeces, and bandanas as long as they meet the definition of a face mask. As research on the effectiveness of different face masks continues to evolve, updates to the definition of a face mask in the public health order may change.

7. Are masks with exhalation valves or vents safe to use?

These types of face masks do not trap respiratory droplets and do not stop the person wearing the mask from spreading COVID-19 to others. Face masks with one-way valves or vents let air out through a hole in the material. The CDC does not recommend using face masks if they have an exhalation valve or vent⁴. The public health order on face masks in schools does not consider face masks with a vent or exhalation valve to be an approved face mask.

8. How should you care for a face mask?

Information on how to make and properly care for cloth face coverings can be found on the CDC website at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>.

9. Will the state of Utah provide face masks to schools?

The Utah State Board of Education (USBE) procured disposable masks for each school as part of PPE health supplies when treating students who get sick at school. Donations have been made to the USBE by Cotopaxi and H.M. Cole to provide cloth face masks for students and staff. These have been distributed by the USBE to local school districts and charters. In addition, five KN95s and two face shields have been provided for each educator and employee in public schools in Utah⁵. These additional face masks and personal protective equipment (PPE) were sent to local emergency managers on August 7, 2020. If you have not received your face masks, please contact your local school district or charter.

School districts can make a request for more PPE by contacting their county emergency manager. The county emergency manager will then make a request to the supply group under Unified Command for consideration.

Students and teachers may also use homemade cloth face masks. Reusable cloth face masks can also be made from very low-cost materials. The CDC has instructions for making a cloth face mask at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/how-to-make-cloth-face-covering.html>.

Public health order on face masks in schools

⁴ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover-guidance.html>

⁵ <https://coronavirus.utah.gov/school-teachers-and-staff-to-receive-ppe-from-state-distribution-center/>

10. What types of school settings does the public health order apply to?

The public health order states that each individual on school property or on a school bus shall wear a face mask. Individuals are required to wear a face mask while at school, on a school bus, or while on school property. This includes public, charter, and private schools that provide any kindergarten through grade-12 program or service, including a residential treatment center that provides any kindergarten through grade-12 programs or services.

A school bus means district- or school-provided transportation that transports a student to or from a school or a school-sponsored activity.

School property means any real property, including any building, structure, facility, or part thereof, that is owned, leased, occupied, or controlled by a school.

11. Does the public health order apply to all students and adults in all schools?

Yes. The public health order applies to all individuals while in any public or private school facility, including K-12 district, charter, and private schools, career and technical education centers, preschool programs provided on school property, and residential treatment centers which provide K-12 programs. The order also applies to school buses which are used for district or school-provided transportation to and from school or a school-sponsored activity.

12. Do people attending a school-athletic event need to wear a face mask?

Yes. All individuals on school property are required to wear a face mask. School property means any real property, including any building, structure, facility, or part thereof, that is owned, leased, occupied, or controlled by a school. This includes athletic facilities, indoor or outdoor venues where athletic events are held, and playing fields.

13. Who was consulted in the drafting of this public health order?

The Utah Department of Health drafted the order with the Governor's Office, with input from organizations representing infectious disease experts, teachers, parents, school officials, school employees, and urban and rural schools.

14. How long is the public health order effective?

The order is effective immediately and remains in effect until December 31, 2020. The public health order may be updated as we learn more about COVID-19 and how it is spreading in Utah.

The Governor previously issued an [Executive Order](#) mandating face coverings in all state government facilities, including all institutions of higher education. That order continues to remain in effect for higher education.

Face shields

15. When can you use a face shield instead of a face mask?

Face shields are not a replacement for face masks. Face shields may be used with face masks for additional protection if an individual chooses. The public health order allows the use of a face shield without a face mask only:

- When seeing a person's mouth is essential for communication, such as for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing or when students and teachers are participating in speech therapy.

16. Are face shields safe to use in place of a face mask?

It is not known if face shields provide any benefit to protect others from the spray of respiratory particles. The CDC does not recommend use of face shields instead of a face mask, or for normal everyday activities.

If you want to wear a face shield, you also need to wear a face mask.

Only wear a face shield instead of a face mask if you are allowed to as outlined in the public health order. If you wear a face shield without a face mask, make sure it wraps around your face and goes below your chin. Only wear a disposable face shield one time. Clean and disinfect reusable face shields after each use. Put your face mask back on as soon as possible. Adding additional layers of protection in these situations such as physical distancing, increasing ventilation or airflow, or extra clearing and sanitization is encouraged.

17. Can a face shield be used instead of a face mask when singing?

Singing is not an exemption allowed in the public health order. Students in choir classes are expected to wear a face mask, even in choir classes that have been moved to larger, indoor settings such as gymnasiums or auditoriums. People who are outdoors and who maintain at least six feet of physical distance between one another are not required to wear face masks. Face shields are not a replacement for face masks. However, a face shield may be used in addition to a face mask if an individual chooses.

Physical distancing and face masks

18. If you wear a face mask, do you still need to physical distance?

Yes. Face masks are very effective to reduce the spread of COVID-19. However, wearing a face mask does not eliminate the risk completely. If you wear a mask AND physical distance, the chance of being exposed to COVID-19 is much lower.

The public health order requires the use of a face mask even while physical distancing except when outdoors and eating or drinking indoors.

19. If I wear a mask when I sing, do I also need to physically distance?

Yes. Certain activities like singing, chanting, or shouting can increase the number of respiratory droplets a person is exposed to in the air. Choir in particular is considered a higher risk activity for COVID-19 spread. Masks and physical distancing, along with other prevention measures such as increasing airflow or ventilation should be taken during these higher risk classes and activities.

20. If I can't wear a face mask while playing a musical instrument, do I need to physically distance?

Yes. Certain activities like singing or playing a wind musical instrument can increase the number of respiratory droplets a person is exposed to in the air.

21. If a teacher is teaching an online course from his or her classroom and is the only person in the classroom, does he or she need to wear a mask?

Faculty and staff should use sound judgement in these scenarios. If a teacher is alone in their classroom, and can ensure no students or other adults will be entering the classroom, they do not need to wear a facemask.

22. What things can be done to keep students safe while they are eating breakfast or lunch at school and they aren't wearing face masks or able to physical distance?

The [school manual](#) has suggestions to make cafeteria spaces as safe as possible as well as ideas for other accommodations to lower the risk of COVID-19 spread (such as having students eat outside while physical distancing or staggering lunch hours).

. If you have a child who has a food allergy, they may need additional accommodations depending on what plans your school has for preventing spread of COVID-19 during lunch.

Exemptions from face masks

23. Does everyone need to wear a face mask?

There is clear scientific evidence that wearing a face mask reduces the spread of COVID-19. Face masks are strongly encouraged to reduce the spread of COVID-19, but it may not be possible in every situation, or for some people, to wear a face mask⁶.

The public health order allows for very limited exemptions from wearing a face mask while at school or on a school bus. In these cases, school administrators should consider adaptations and alternatives whenever possible to help someone wear a face mask or to reduce the risk of COVID-19 spread if it is not possible for someone to wear one.

24. Are there medical reasons for children to not wear a face mask?

There are very few times when an individual should not wear a face mask for medical reasons^{7 8}. Medical exemptions from wearing a face mask should be carefully considered by a licensed healthcare provider.

It is safe for individuals to wear a face mask even if they have a health condition like asthma or allergies. Many children with developmental disabilities have other medical conditions that may place them at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19. Wearing a mask is protective for these children⁹.

If a healthcare provider determines a child has a condition that warrants an exemption to wearing a face mask while at school, it is likely that child has other health conditions that put them at severe illness from COVID-19. Parents should talk with their child's healthcare provider about whether their child should do online or remote learning to limit the risk of being exposed to COVID-19.

25. Who is allowed to not wear a face mask?

The public health order requires all students, teachers, employees, volunteers, or visitors wear a face mask while on school property or on a school bus, even if they are able to physical distance (stay 6 feet away from other people).

The public health order allows for some exemptions, meaning a mask is not required for certain people or situations. The order does not apply to:

- An individual who is outdoors AND physical distancing (meaning they can stay at least 6 feet from another individual).
- An individual who is eating or drinking AND physical distancing (meaning they can stay at least 6 feet from another individual).
- Children younger than 3 years of age.
- An individual with a medical condition, mental health condition, or disability that prevents him or her from wearing a face covering.
- An individual who is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove a face covering without help.
- Anyone who is engaged in an activity where seeing a person's mouth is essential for communication, such as for communicating with individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing or when students and teachers are participating in speech therapy.

⁷ <https://pws.byu.edu/covid-19-and-masks>

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<https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/cloth-face-coverings/>

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<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/Cloth-Face-Coverings-for-Children-During-COVID-19.aspx>

- An individual who has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Section 504 accommodation that would exempt him or her from wearing a face mask.
- When a face mask must be temporarily removed to provide or receive a service involving the person's nose or face, such as speech therapy.
- During outdoor recess for elementary school students.
- During a school-sponsored activity if an individual cannot reasonably participate while wearing a mask. In this case, each individual participating in the activity must complete a symptom assessment, verbally confirm they are free of COVID-19 symptoms before participating in each event, and attest to the fact they have not been in close contact (within 6 feet for 15 minutes or more) with a person who has tested positive for COVID in the last 14 days, and where possible, confirm participant temperature is below 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit.
- During a physical education class if an individual cannot reasonably participate while wearing a mask. In this case, each individual participating in the physical education class must complete a symptom assessment, verbally confirm they are free of COVID-19 symptoms before participating in each event, and attest to the fact they have not been in close contact (within 6 feet for 15 minutes or more) with a person who has tested positive for COVID in the last 14 days, and where possible, confirm participant temperature is below 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit.

26. How do I get a mask exemption for my child?

Parents need to get a medical directive from their child's healthcare provider stating the child has a known medical or mental health condition or other disability and can't wear a mask during school or needs other accommodations, if there are no current accommodations on file with the school already. Parents are also responsible for providing the medical directive to their child's school. A school may require additional exemption forms to be filled out. Please contact your school to find out what paperwork is needed.

27. Who can sign the medical directive?

A medical directive exempting an individual from wearing a mask while at school must be provided by a licensed healthcare provider. A licensed healthcare provider includes a Doctor of Medicine (MD), Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (DO), Physician Assistant (PA), or Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN).

28. Can an exemption be granted based on parent request alone?

A school may require mask exemption documentation from a Doctor of Medicine (MD), Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (DO), Physician Assistant (PA), or Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN). Schools should have a consistent policy for when they will require medical documentation

29. Can an exemption be granted for an entire school?

No. The public health order allows exemptions for an individual, not an entire school. Individuals who qualify for an exemption as outlined in the order should contact their school to determine if any documentation is required.

30. Does a student still need a medical directive if he or she already has an IEP or 504 Plan and the medical exemption relates to the disability identified in the existing plan?

No. The public health order provides a different exemption for students who have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. section 1414, or an accommodation under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C. section 794, that would necessitate exempting the individual from wearing a face covering. These students do not fall within the medical directive provision and the determination can be made by the IEP/504 team, including the parent, based on the child's disability and medical diagnosis. The decision should be documented in the child's IEP or 504 Plan.

31. Should a school create a 504 Plan for a student who obtains a medical exemption to the mask requirement?

No. The mask requirement and the medical directive for exemption are generally applicable admission requirements issued by public health authorities. The public health order is a state law and is similar to the current state vaccination requirement, although temporary.

A school is not required to implement all of the procedures of 504 such as evaluation, team meetings, 504 Plan, etc., in response to a student's medical mask exemption. It is merely an exemption to the temporary mask requirement.

However, if the parent indicates that the student's medical condition is causing problems beyond the masking requirement, school officials should clarify with the parent whether a formal 504 evaluation is being requested or is necessary.

32. Will parents be notified if someone in their child's class is not wearing a mask or is exempt from wearing a mask?

No. It is up to the school to enforce mask wearing among their student body and staff.

33. Do students with disabilities need special accommodations related to this order?

Students with a medical condition, mental health condition, or disability that prevent them from wearing a face covering, including individuals with a medical condition for whom wearing a face covering could cause harm or obstruct breathing, or who is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove a face covering without assistance are exempt from this order. A school may require an individual to provide a medical directive verifying the need for an exemption.

Anyone who is deaf or hard of hearing, or anyone who is communicating with someone who is deaf or hard of hearing where the ability to see the mouth is essential for communication, may use a face shield or alternative protection.

School districts and charters are required¹⁰ to systematically review all current plans (Individual Healthcare Plans, Individualized Education Program, or Section 504 plans) for accommodating students with special healthcare needs and update their care plans as needed to decrease their risk for exposure to COVID-19.

34. What are some examples of times when people need adaptations or alternatives to a face mask while at school?

It may be hard for some people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, mental health conditions, or other sensory sensitivities to wear a face mask. They should talk to their doctor or healthcare provider for advice about wearing a face mask and if appropriate a medical directive should be created. In any case where a student or staff member has received an exemption, it is very important that other prevention measures are in place including physical distancing, washing your hands often, and cleaning and disinfecting surfaces that are touched often.

People who rely on lipreading to communicate may not be able to wear a face mask (such as someone who is deaf or hard of hearing, or someone who cares for or interacts with a person who is hearing impaired). Students and teachers who are participating in speech therapy where the ability to see the mouth is essential for communication may also need adaptations or alternatives to a face mask. In these situations,

- Consider using a clear face covering.
- If a clear face covering isn't available, consider whether you can:
 - Use written communication
 - Use closed captioning
 - Decrease background noise to make it possible to communicate if you are wearing a cloth face covering that blocks your lips.
- Consider using a plexiglass barrier.
- Maintain a physical distance of 6 feet from other people.
- If a face shield must be worn, make sure it wraps around your face and goes below your chin. When you are not communicating, you should put your face mask back on. A face shield is not a substitute for a face mask.

35. Why does the mask order say a child younger than 3-years old does not need to wear a face mask?

The youngest children in school-based preschool programs are 3-years old, which is why the public health order provides this exemption.

¹⁰ <https://schools.utah.gov/file/a5eba09a-42b8-45c0-b8fa-9adeea879fcd>

36. Is it legal to require a medical directive verifying a need for an exemption or does doing so violate IDEA or Section 504?

Neither federal IDEA nor Section 504 speak directly to temporary emergency health provisions enacted by a state in times of emergency and how state education agencies (SEAs) and local education agencies (LEAs) should apply them. Traditionally, courts have held that states and local school boards have broad discretion to legislate in the areas of education, health, and safety.¹¹ Generally applicable, system-wide changes in public schools that affect disabled and non-disabled children alike are not prohibited by federal laws where the federal laws do not specifically address the intended action of the state law.

For example, vaccination laws are not specifically addressed by, altered by, or prohibited by IDEA or Section 504. They are generally applied admission requirements for the health and safety of all students. Many states allow parents to provide an exemption from a medical provider. Absent the proof of vaccination or the medical exemption, a student will be excluded from school. IDEA/504 are not violated by the exclusion or by the requirement for proof of vaccination or exemption.

Face covering requirements have not been specifically addressed by courts. However, face coverings are much less intrusive upon a person than a vaccination. In light of the courts' support of mandatory vaccination requirements (which once administered cannot be undone), it is highly likely that the courts will find a generally applicable temporary face mask requirement and the need for a medical exemption to be a valid exercise of the state and local school board powers.

Enforcement

37. Who has the authority to mandate face coverings in schools?

Under Utah Code §§ 26-1-30(3), (5), and (6), the Utah Department of Health has the power and duty to promote and protect the health and wellness of the people within the state; to control the causes of epidemic, infectious, communicable, and other diseases affecting the public health; and to prevent and control communicable, infectious, acute, chronic, or any other disease or health hazard that the Department considers to be dangerous, important, or likely to affect the public health.

38. Is this order enforceable?

Yes. Utah Code §§ 26-1-30(3), (5), and (6) allows for enforcement of a public health order. Violation or noncompliance with a health order may be punishable as a class B misdemeanor. However, it is not the state's intent to seek criminal prosecution of the

¹¹ Desiano v. Warner-Lambert & Co., 467 F.3d 85, 86 (2d Cir. 2006); Edwards v. Aguillard, 482 U.S. 578, 107 S. Ct. 2573, 2577, 96 L.Ed.2d 510 (1987); Bd. of Educ., Island Trees Union Free Sch. Dist. No. 26 v. Pico, 457 U.S. 853, 863, 102 S.Ct. 2799, 73 L.Ed.2d 435 (1982).

public health order.

39. How will it be enforced?

Students can be sent home for not wearing a face covering. Existing behavior policies and procedures at all schools should be updated to reflect the circumstances and to support teachers and staff in their response to student behaviors related to mitigating the spread of COVID-19.

40. Where can I report a student or teacher not wearing a face mask?

Please contact your school to report a student or teacher who is not wearing face masks. Schools will have policies and procedures for how to handle these situations.

41. What if parents are angry about the masking requirement?

It's important to treat everyone with dignity and respect. Even though a statewide public health order has the force of law, it's best to appeal to a person's sense of the greater good. Remind others that a mask requirement is a temporary measure while we wait for a vaccine to be developed. Masks are our medicine for now. They have the best chance of stopping the spread of droplets from one person to another and the quickest way to get back to normal.

42. What if a student who does not qualify for an exemption refuses to wear a face covering?

The public health order has the same authority/force as a law during the time it is enacted. Failure to comply with the order is a misdemeanor. The order requires all students, K-12 to wear masks. As face coverings are required, if a student does not qualify for one of the outlined exemptions, it is assumed the student would not be allowed on the bus or to be physically present in school. This exclusion will last until the public health order expires or the student decides to begin wearing a face mask at school.

While school staff should respectfully recognize a parent or student's opinion, and handle the situation with compassion, the public health order is clear and the student who does not qualify for an exemption can be sent home from school and should be informed of alternative educational opportunities available.

Schools must be careful to equitably implement the order. For example: if all students seeking a medical exemption are required to provide a medical provider's note, then all students should be held to the same standard. Exceptions should not be made based on subjective factors such as trustworthiness of the student, a history of difficulty communicating with a parent, or familial relationships with the student. Another example might be if the school provides a disposable mask for a student the first time the student

forgets to bring a mask. The school must not discriminate when mitigating non-compliance.

Quarantine guidance and face masks

43. Does wearing a face mask change quarantine recommendations?

No. If you wear a face mask, it reduces the risk of COVID-19. However, wearing a face mask does not eliminate the risk completely. Anyone who came into close contact with a person who tested positive for COVID-19, even if they were both wearing a face mask, will still be considered exposed and should quarantine for 14 days. Close contact means a person was closer than 6 feet or 2 meters (about 2 arm lengths) from someone who tested positive for COVID-19 for 15 minutes or longer.

44. If a student, teacher, or other school employee has already tested positive for COVID-19 and has finished isolation, do they still have to wear a mask in school?

Yes, the person would still have to wear a mask at school. There are no exemptions for face masks if a person has completed their isolation period.

45. If a student, teacher, or other school employee has finished quarantine, do they still have to wear a mask in school?

Yes, the person would still have to wear a mask at school. There are no exemptions for face masks if a person has completed their quarantine period.

46. If I wear a face shield (not a face mask) and physically distance, will I have to quarantine if someone in the class tests positive for COVID-19?

Face shields are not a substitute for face masks. Wearing a face mask or face shield does not change when someone would need to quarantine.

Anyone who came into close contact with a person who tested positive for COVID-19, even if they were both wearing a face mask or face shield, will still be considered exposed and should quarantine for 14 days. Close contact means a person was closer than 6 feet or 2 meters (about 2 arm lengths) from someone who tested positive for COVID-19 for 15 minutes or longer.

Classes or school settings with a higher chance of COVID-19 spread

47. What classes are considered higher risk for COVID-19 spread?

School administrators should identify courses that would put students and teachers at an increased risk of exposure and work with their local health department to make a plan to reduce the risk for these classes.

School administrators may also consider limiting or canceling nonessential assemblies, recitals, dances, and other school gatherings or reschedule them as virtual gatherings.

Gatherings that are held outside, where students and others who attend can practice physical distancing, are also an option to reduce the risk of exposure

Choir and Band Classes

Choir is an inherently high-risk of exposure because people are more likely to be exposed to someone else's respiratory droplets. Consider using several strategies¹², such as:

- Hold choir courses or practice in outdoor spaces and keep students spaced six feet apart.
- Face masks are not required outdoors where six feet of distance can be maintained between individuals.
- Limit the amount of time students are face-to-face.
- Use barriers in between students.
- Increase the airflow and ventilation.
- Build in time to clean and sanitize between classes or when students use the area.

48. If I wear a mask when I sing, do I need to physically distance?

Yes. Certain activities like singing, chanting, or shouting can increase the number of respiratory droplets a person is exposed to in the air. It is important to wear a face mask during these higher risk activities as well as implement as many additional prevention measures as possible, such as physical distancing or increasing airflow and ventilation.

49. If I can't wear a face mask while playing a musical instrument, do I need to physically distance?

Yes. Certain activities like singing or playing a wind musical instrument can increase the number of respiratory droplets a person is exposed to in the air. It is important to implement as many prevention measures as possible during these higher risk activities, such as physical distancing or increasing airflow and ventilation.

50. Do I have to wear a face mask during choir or while playing a musical instrument?

Yes. It is expected that students and teachers wear a mask during choir or while singing. If it is not feasible to wear a mask when playing a wind instrument, physical distancing should be implemented along with any additional prevention measures the school is able to do, such as increasing air flow and ventilation.

Alternative learning options for students with exemptions or who refuse to wear a mask

51. If a student is excluded from school, must the school provide alternative education?
If the student is excluded from school because the student refuses to wear a face covering and the student is not receiving special education services under an IEP or services under Section 504, it is up to the local education agency (LEA) as to whether alternative or distance education is provided.

52. What if the student who is excluded for not wearing a mask is entitled to special education services under an IEP or FAPE under Section 504, does the “10-day rule” apply?

If a student who has an individualized education program (IEP) through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or is receiving services under Section 504, is required to stay home by public health authorities or school officials for an extended period of time (longer than 10 days) because of their refusal to wear a mask, provision should be made to maintain education services. During such absences, if the school is open and serving other students, the school must ensure that the student continues to receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE), consistent with protecting the health and safety of the student and those providing that education to the student. If feasible, the student’s IEP Team, or the personnel responsible for ensuring FAPE to a student for the purposes of Section 504, can be utilized to assist with the effort to determine if some, or all, of the identified services can be provided through alternate or additional methods.

[Fact Sheet: Addressing the Risk of COVID-19 in Schools While Protecting the Civil Rights of Students](#), United States Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights

[QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON PROVIDING SERVICES TO CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES DURING THE CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 OUTBREAK](#), United State Department of Education