



39 Woodland Street
Hartford, CT 06105
Ph: 860.807.2200
Fax: 860.807.2196
www.cttech.org

Series 2020-2021

August 24, 2020

Administrative Letter CT-1

****POST & CIRCULATE****

TO: All Users

REVISED and REISSUED

September 9, 2020

FROM: Jeffrey S. Wihbey, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Face Covering/Mask Use during COVID-19 Pandemic

CTECS' first priority is the health and well-being of students and staff as the system prepares for and implements the safe reopening of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic. Current evidence shows that the proper wearing of facial coverings or masks helps to stop the spread of the virus. The [Center for Disease Control \(CDC\) recommends](#) that people wear masks in public settings especially when other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain. The Connecticut Department of Health (DPH) and the Connecticut State Department of Education, as outlined in [Adapt, Advance, Achieve: Connecticut's Plan to Learn and Grow Together](#) requires the wearing of face coverings/ masks for all students and staff when they are inside school buildings and while riding school transportation vehicles, with certain exceptions. Furthermore, CTECS is part of the Connecticut State Department of Education and Governor Lamont has directed all State employees to wear face coverings, unless doing so would be contrary to their health or safety or due to a medical condition.

For the foregoing reasons, CTECS is implementing a face covering/ mask requirement in order to promote a safe and healthy learning, teaching and work environment for students, faculty, staff and visitors. This policy applies to students, faculty, staff, and visitors. It is intended to safeguard the health and safety of students and staff and to allow all students the opportunity to return to in-person learning.

Definitions

Face covering/ mask – a cloth, paper, or disposable face covering that covers the nose and mouth. The face covering/ mask should fit snugly around the nose and cheeks to prevent gaps. The fabric should be thick enough to block sunlight. A mask of dense woven material is preferred. Based on these specifications, this policy requires: No neck gaiters; No bandanas; No exhalation valves or vents.

Face shield – a clear, plastic shield that covers the forehead, extends below the chin and wraps around the sides of the face, protecting the eyes, nose and mouth.

Clear plastic barrier – a clear plastic or solid surface that can be cleaned and sanitized.

Required Use of Face Covering/Mask

All students, staff, and visitors must wear an acceptable face covering/ mask that completely covers the nose and mouth when they are inside the school building, on school grounds or at a school sponsored activity, even when social distancing is maintained.

For students, wearing a face covering/ mask is part of the school uniform and must satisfy the dress code requirements. Gaiters, bandanas and masks with exhalation valves or vents are not acceptable forms of face coverings/ masks.

CTECS' schools shall maintain a supply of disposable face coverings/ masks in the event that a staff member, student or visitor does not have one for use.

Information shall be provided to staff, students and students' families regarding the proper use, removal and washing of cloth face coverings/ masks. Schools shall provide trainings as necessary regarding the proper use of face coverings/ masks.

Parents/guardians may not excuse their child from the face covering/ mask requirement, as the wearing of a face covering/ mask is intended to address the health and safety risks associated with the transmission of COVID-19.

Exemption from the Use of Face Coverings/Masks

An individual shall be excused from the face covering/ mask requirement if the individual:

- has trouble breathing
- is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance
- has a medical reason making it unsafe to wear a face covering/ mask.

Written documentation stating that the person is qualified for a medical exemption is required in order for the school to permit the exemption. Such documentation need not name or describe the condition that qualifies the person for the exemption and must be provided by a licensed medical provider or a state agency that provides support services for people with emotional, intellectual or physical disabilities. Medical documentation received by the school will be kept by the school nurse in the student's medical records.

Employees seeking a medical exemption to the face covering/ mask requirement should contact Human Resources to discuss the availability of such an accommodation. Any information provided will be evaluated in accordance with then-current state policy.

Limited Exceptions to the Use of Face Coverings/Masks

When other and appropriate mitigating practices are in place, students will not be required to wear face coverings/ masks while **eating, drinking, during physical education classes** or when students are **outside and effectively practicing social distancing or other precautions**.

Exceptions may also be necessary as an **accommodation for students with disabilities** or for staff involved with certain **special education activities or situations where removing the mask is necessary to teach**, including but not limited to the provision of speech therapy or for a child with a hearing loss who needs to read lips.

Athletic coaches will provide students with information regarding the limited exceptions to the use of face coverings/masks during athletic activities.

Teachers and staff are excused from wearing a face covering/ mask **while eating, drinking, or when outside and effectively practicing social distancing or other precautions**.

Although face coverings/ masks may be removed during eating, they are required in all dining areas while entering and leaving or getting food and drinks. They may be removed at socially distanced tables in order to eat but must be replaced after eating.

Face covering/ mask use will not be required of employees when they are alone in a private office that is not physically shared with others or frequently visited by others. However, they are required to wear a face covering/ mask when anyone enters the private office space. A classroom or shop is not considered to be a “private office.”

Face Covering/ Mask Breaks

Face coverings/ masks breaks during the school day shall be determined by the school Principal according to the following general guidelines:

- Scheduled mask breaks should be provided every 1.5 to 2 hours and may also be provided when necessary throughout the day.
- Mask breaks should take place outside if possible or in larger spaces within the school where students can appropriately distance.
- During mask breaks, social distancing requirements must be maintained and student and staff interaction should be minimized.
- A mask break may last a few minutes but not exceed ten minutes.
- When students remove face coverings/ masks, the folded mask may be stored between uses in a clean sealable paper bag or breathable container.

Use of Face Shields

CTECS recognizes that the CDC has stated that it is not clear if face shields provide any benefit as source control to protect others from the spray of respiratory particles. Face shields may also

be useful in situations where it is important for students to see how a teacher pronounces words (e.g. English Learners, foreign language) and social distancing is maintained.

Face shields may be an option for those students with medical, behavioral or other challenges who are unable to wear face coverings/ masks, however, face shields alone are not a sufficient alternate to the wearing of face covering/ mask for source control. Face shields should be used only when other methods are not available or appropriate and with strict adherence to social distancing.

In shop, students who utilize face shields are still required to use safety glasses and other required safety gear.

Transportation

Student passengers are required to wear a face covering/ mask that completely covers the nose and mouth during transit. The student's face covering/ mask must be in place prior to boarding the bus, van or other student transportation vehicles and must be kept in place until they are completely off the vehicle.

The face covering/ mask is also required for the drivers of the vehicle.

Violations of this Policy

Violations of this policy will be considered a health and safety violation.

If a student refuses to wear a face covering/ mask and such refusal does not fall within any of the exemptions allowed by this policy, the student will be removed from class. In addition, school personnel will contact the student's parent/guardian to address the behavior and discuss available options. Students who violate this policy may also be subject to the full range of disciplinary sanctions.

Faculty and staff who violate this policy will be subject to disciplinary action.

If a visitor refuses to wear a face covering/ mask, entry to the school or CTECS facility may be denied.

References

Executive Order No. 7NNN, "Protection of Public Health and Safety During COVID-19 Pandemic-Masks and Face Coverings," August 14, 2020.

"Adapt, Advance, Achieve: Connecticut's Plan to Learn and Grow Together," Connecticut State Department of Education, August 3, 2020; Addendum 11, "Interim Guidance for the Use of Face Coverings in School during COVID-19," August 31, 2020; ; FAQ Regarding Reopening K-12 Public Schools, Vol. 2, August 11, 2020; FAQ Regarding Reopening K-12 Public Schools, Vol. 3, September 2, 2020.