

Face Coverings in School

This administrative regulation pertains to students and visitors. It has been developed to fulfill the guiding principles contained in the *Framework for Connecticut Schools*, specifically to safeguard the health and safety of students and staff and to allow all students the opportunity to return and remain in classrooms full-time, in-person.

This masking requirement is being implemented to promote the safest possible learning, teaching, and work environment for students, staff, and visitors during a pandemic/epidemic. The first priority is the health and well-being of students and staff as the Bethany Public School District (District) at all times.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevent (CDC) and the Connecticut Department of Health (DPH) and the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), as outlined in *Adapt, Advance, Achieve: Connecticut's Plan to Learn and Grow Together* requires the wearing of face coverings for all students and staff when they are inside the school building and while riding school transportation vehicles, with certain exceptions.

Definitions

Face covering/mask – a cloth, paper, or disposable face covering that covers the nose and mouth. It may or may not be medical grade. (Evidence shows that the proper wearing of facial masks or coverings helps stop the spread of the virus, which is currently by droplets when an individual coughs, sneezes, or talks.)

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 from contamination from respiratory droplets, along with masks or respirators.

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

Transportation

Student passengers are required to wear a face mask or cloth face covering that completely covers the nose and mouth during transit. The student's face covering must be in place prior to boarding the bus, van, or other vehicles and must be kept in place until they are completely off the bus or van. The Board shall provide back-up masks if students do not have face coverings when boarding a school bus or van.

The face mask or cloth face covering is also applicable to the drivers of the vehicle.

The Board may consider the option of assigning a temporary monitor on student transportation at the beginning of the school year to facilitate compliance with this new face mask protocol.

School Building and Grounds

All students, staff, and visitors are required to use face coverings, that completely covers the nose and mouth, when they are inside the school building or on school grounds, even when social distancing is maintained. An individual shall be excused from this requirement for the following listed reasons, per CDC guidance.

STUDENTS

Regulation 5132.1(b)

The individual:

1. has trouble breathing;
2. is unconscious;
3. is incapacitated; or
4. cannot remove the mask or face covering without assistance.

In addition, masks or face coverings shall not be required for anyone who has a medical reason making it unsafe to wear a face mask or face covering. A written notification from a licensed medical provider, the Department of Developmental Services, or other state agency that provides or supports services for people with emotional, intellectual, or physical disabilities, or a person authorized by any such agency is required in order for the Board to permit a medical exemption. Such documentation need not name or describe the condition that qualifies the person for the exemption.

Parents/guardians may not excuse their child from this face mask requirement, by signing a waiver, because such wearing is a mandated requirement that the Office of the Governor, the Connecticut State Department of Education, and/or the Connecticut State Department of Public Health have defined as necessary for school districts to comply with in order to open schools during a pandemic/epidemic.

In addition to the wearing of face masks, the District will maximize social distancing between student's workstations and desks, achieving six feet when feasible. Space between the teacher and students is to be maximized to reduce the risk of increased droplets from teachers during instruction. A teacher is permitted to remove a face covering or mask during instruction. If the teacher removes the face covering or mask during instruction, spacing shall be increased beyond six feet. A teacher who remains seated during instruction requires the use of a physical barrier. Face shields, however, are not an acceptable substitute for face-covering masks.

Transparent (clear) masks should be considered as an option for teachers and students in classes for deaf and hard of hearing students. Pre-K and special education teachers should consider wearing clear masks.

Face shields may be an option for those students with medical, behavioral, or other challenges who are unable to wear face masks or coverings. The District recognizes that face shields are not as effective for source control and should be used only when other methods are not available or appropriate. Therefore, the use of face shields for those with medical conditions is done with the understanding of their limitations and a heightened need for strict adherence to social distancing.

The District shall provide to any student, staff member, or visitor a face mask if such individual does not have one. Training shall be provided as necessary regarding the proper use of face coverings. Information shall be provided to staff, students, and students' families regarding the proper use, removal, and washing of cloth face coverings.

Limited Exceptions to Use of Face Coverings

When other and appropriate mitigating practices are in place, such as social distancing, students will not be required to wear face masks or coverings while eating, drinking, or when students are outside and effectively practicing social distancing and any other possible mitigants. Exceptions may also be necessary for certain special education students or other special populations.

STUDENTS

Regulation 5132.1(c)

Face shields may be useful in situations where it is important for students to see how a teacher pronounces words (e.g. English Learners, early childhood, foreign language, etc.) and social distancing is maintained. However, face shields alone are not a sufficient alternative to the wearing of a face mask for source control.

Mask Breaks

Breaks from wearing masks shall be scheduled throughout the school day, by the teacher, provided that strict social distancing requirements are maintained and limitations are enforced regarding student and staff mobility.

During time of eating, face masks or coverings may be removed. Masks are required in all dining areas while entering and leaving or getting food and drinks. They may be removed at appropriately socially distanced tables in order to eat but must be replaced after eating.

A recess period may be used as a break from wearing masks when social distancing requirements are maintained to the greatest degree feasible.

Violations of this Policy

Violations of this policy, whether by students or staff, shall be handled in the same manner as other violations of applicable Board policy and Administrative Regulation.

If a student refuses to wear a face mask or covering and does not fulfill any of the exemptions allowed, such student, shall be sent to the school's isolation room. The parent/guardian shall be contacted to rectify the situation, school personnel to explain the options available regarding schooling and for the possible removal of the child from the school setting.

If a visitor refuses to wear a face covering, for non-medical reasons, entry to the school facility may be denied.

Community Outreach

The District shall engage in community education programs including signage, mass and targeted communication, and positive reinforcement that will actively promote mask use consistent with CDC, DDH, CSDE, and OSHA guidance. Community members will be reminded that mask use does not replace the need for social distancing, washing of hands, and other preventative practices recommended by all appropriate authorities.

Other Considerations

- The District shall maintain a supply of disposable face coverings in the event that a staff member, student, or visitor does not have one for use.
- Special attention must be given to putting on and removing face coverings for purposes such as eating. After use, the front of the face-covering is considered contaminated and should not be touched during removal or replacement. Hand hygiene should be performed immediately after removing and after replacing the face covering.

STUDENTS

Regulation 5132.1(d)

- When medically appropriate, the nurse shall substitute use of metered-dose inhalers and spacers for students with respiratory issues.
- Face shields with face masks may be used by staff who support students with special healthcare needs such as those who are unable to wear masks and who may need assistance with activities of daily living, such as toileting and eating.
- Mask use will not be required by employees when they are alone in private offices. However, they are required to mask when anyone enters a private office space and required to wear a mask if their office space is physically shared with others and does not allow for six feet of physical distancing or if the work area is frequented by others (such as a reception area).

Until further notice, the District will require the wearing of masks. The District reserves the right to interpret the provisions of this Administrative Regulation and to modify any or all matters contained herein at any time, subject to applicable law.

Legal References:

Connecticut General Statutes § 10-154a

Connecticut General Statutes § 10-207

Connecticut General Statutes § 10-221

Connecticut General Statutes § 19a-221

Connecticut General Statutes § 52-557b

Connecticut Executive Order 7NNN, August 14, 2020

20 U.S.C. 1232g, 45 C.F.R. 99

Adapt, Advance, Achieve: Connecticut's Plan to Learn and Grow Together,
Connecticut State Department of Education, as amended

Connecticut Local Education Agency School Reopening Template

CDC Considerations for Schools

CDC Considerations for Coronavirus

CDC Quarantine & Isolation

CDC Use of Cloth Face Coverings to Help Slow the Spread of COVID-19

CDC Interim Guidance for Administrators of US K-12 Schools and Child Care Programs

CDC Schools Decision Tree for Schools Reopening

Regulation approved: December 9, 2020

Source: CABE/Shipman

**FACE COVERING
MEDICAL/HEALTH EXEMPTION FORM**

COVID-19 is a highly contagious virus that spreads by respiratory droplets released when individuals talk, cough, or sneeze. Many individuals infected with COVID-19 are asymptomatic and contagious. Federal and state public health agencies, including the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), recommend that individuals wear a face covering to limit the spread of COVID-19.

The Connecticut State Department of Education and the Bethany Public School District require **ALL** students, beginning in preschool (ages three and over), to wear face coverings during the school day. Any student seeking a medical exemption to the face-covering requirement must have the student’s treating physician complete the below Medical/Health Exemption Form. As noted below, the Bethany Public School District will consult with the student’s treating physician to determine what reasonable accommodations, if any, would allow the student to wear a face-covering during the school day. In light of the significant public health and safety requirements, the Bethany Public School District requires that any request for medical exemption be completed and submitted to the Bethany Community School Nurse, Jennifer Bobok.

A student submitting requests for medical exemption is subject to COVID-19 containment strategies pending the completion of the exemption review process. COVID-19 containment strategies may include assignment to home-based remote learning to mitigate the possibility of infection to the student or others in the physical school building.

Name of Student:	
Date of Birth:	
Home Address of Student:	
Name(s) of Parent/Guardian:	

Contact Information for Treating Physician	
Name:	
Address:	
Email:	
Phone:	
Fax:	

The Bethany Public School District reserves the right to deny mask exemption requests without sufficient information to determine the health-related necessity of such request.

STUDENTS

Regulation 5132.1 – Form A(2)

I hereby consent to school officials of the Bethany Public School District consulting with the above named treating physician in connection with the request for a medical exemption from wearing a face-covering during the COVID-19 pandemic. I understand that my child’s treating physician authorized to exchange health/medical and educational information related to the face-covering medical exemption request submitted on behalf of my child, _____ (name of student), with the Bethany Public School District. I understand that the purpose of the exchange of such information is to determine whether a medical exemption is necessary and/or whether there are any reasonable accommodations that should be considered in connection with the face-covering exemption request. I understand that this authorization will expire on June 30, 2021, unless I revoke this authorization at an earlier time by submitting written notice of the withdrawal of consent. I acknowledge that health/medical records, once shared with the Bethany Public School District, will be education records under Federal Education Record Laws (FERPA) and may not be protected by the HIPAA Privacy Rule. I also understand that refusal to consent to the exchange of information described above will not affect access to healthcare.

Printed Name of Parent/Guardian:	
Signature of Parent/Guardian:	
Date:	

**FACE COVERING
MEDICAL/HEALTH EXEMPTION VERIFICATION FORM**

This form must be completed by the student’s treating physician to verify a health or medical reason that prohibits the student from wearing a face covering in the school building and/or on school grounds or to identify possible accommodations for the student to wear a face covering within the school building or on school grounds. Upon completion, this form must be provided by the treating physician directly to School Nurse, Jennifer Bobok, Bethany Community School, 44 Peck Road, Bethany, CT 06524, jbobok@bethany-ed.org, secured fax number (833) 479-4458.

The treating physician MUST consult with school health supervisory personnel prior to completing this form. The contact information for the school health supervisory personnel for this matter COVID-19 Liaison at the Bethany Public School District is Principal Tom Reed-Swale, Bethany Community School, (203) 393-3350.

Medical Verification

Yes **No**
 I have consulted with school health supervisory personnel regarding the student’s ability to wear a face-covering due to a verified medical or health reason.

 After consultation with school health supervisory personnel, I have determined that reasonable accommodations would permit the student to wear a face-covering for parts or all of the school day.

If yes, to the above question:
I have determined that the following reasonable accommodations would permit the student to wear a face-covering during the school day (examples include, without limitation, face-covering breaks at specified intervals, use of face shield when a face covering is contraindicated, use of bandana or looser fitting face covering):

-
-

 After consultation with school health supervisory personnel, I have determined that the student cannot wear a face-covering during the entire school day due to a verified medical or health reason.

The student has been diagnosed with the following medical condition(s) that prevent the student from wearing a face-covering at all times during the school day:

*** Documentation supporting the above diagnosis MUST be submitted to the Bethany Public School District along with this Medical Verification Form.**

By signing below, I verify that the above information is accurate to the best of my professional knowledge.

Signature of Treating Physician

Date

Print Name of Treating Physician

CT License No.