

Cloth Face Coverings for Children at CHA

We will require staff and students to wear masks when school reopens in the fall. We recommend that all caregivers and families be familiar with the CDC's recommendations around cloth face coverings, which you can read [here](#). The CDC generally recommends individuals wear masks to protect people around the wearer, in the event the wearer is infected but not symptomatic, to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Masks are NOT a substitute for social distancing, hand washing, or other everyday preventative actions.

Is there a "right way" to wear a mask?

Yes. Place the mask securely over the nose and mouth and stretch it from ear to ear. Remember to wash your hands before and after you put your mask on, and avoid touching the mask once it's on your face. When you need to take the mask off, wash your hands first and avoid touching the front of the face-covering by taking it off from behind. Masks can be removed when students are eating and drinking, during which time they will be physically distanced.

Wash masks after each wearing. Use regular laundry detergent and the warmest appropriate water setting for the cloth used to make the mask. Make sure to completely dry the mask after washing. Use the highest heat setting and leave in the dryer until completely dry.

What kind of cloth face covering is best?

Homemade or purchased masks are fine for most people to wear. For children, the right fit is important. Pleated masks with elastic are likely to work best for kids. Adult masks are usually 6x12 inches, and even a child-sized 5x10 inch mask may be too large for small children. Try to find the right size for your child's face, and be sure to adjust it for a secure fit. Due to limited supply, professional-grade masks like N-95 masks should be reserved for medical professionals on the front lines who have increased risk of exposure to coronavirus. **Gaiters are not permitted at CHA.**

What if my child is scared of wearing a face covering?

Understandably, children may be afraid of wearing a mask at first. Here are a few ideas to help make them seem less scary:

- Look in the mirror with the mask on and talk about it.
- Put a mask on a favorite stuffed animal.
- Decorate them so they're more personalized and fun.
- Show your child pictures of other children wearing them.
- Draw one on their favorite book character.
- Practice wearing the mask at home to help your child get used to it.

For children over 3, try focusing on germs. Explain that germs are special to your own body. Some germs are good and some are bad. The bad ones can make you sick. Since we can't always tell which are good or bad, the masks help make sure you keep those germs away from your own body.

One of the biggest challenges with having children wear masks relates to them "feeling different" or stereotyping them as being sick. As more people wear masks, children will get used to them and not feel singled out or strange about wearing them.

What about children with special health care needs?

- Children who are considered high-risk or severely immunocompromised are encouraged to wear an N95 mask for protection.
- Any student who cannot wear a mask or face shield due to a medical condition, including those with respiratory issues that impede breathing, a mental health condition, or disability and students who would be unable to remove a mask without assistance, are not required to wear face coverings.
- Individuals who are communicating or seeking to communicate with someone who is hearing impaired or who has another disability, where the ability to see the mouth is essential to communication, are not required to wear a mask; however, individuals should consider using another type of face-covering such as a plastic face shield.

What About PE Class? Students and the PE Coach must wear face coverings unless they are outdoors, engaged in strenuous activity, and can consistently maintain social distancing of at least 6 feet.

What about Music Class? Children will keep their masks on during music and be physically distanced if they are singing.

Is there a Uniform Requirement for Masks at CHA?

To allow students some creative freedom of expression with their masks (in the hopes of making wearing them a more fun experience), we do not require a particular color. We think it's more important that masks are a good fit, and the best way to ensure that is to give parents freedom of choice for where they are bought. That said, masks should be school and age-appropriate and not feature graphics that are likely to cause upset or offense. No masks with an exhalation valve or gaiters, please. Masks must be washed every day, so please ensure you have an adequate supply. For obvious reasons, misplaced masks will be put in the garbage and not the Lost and Found, so please label your child's mask.