



COVID-19 Guidance Face Coverings for Children

I. General Guidance

This guidance is meant for all locations outside of the home where Delaware children spend their time, including but not limited to child care, school, summer camp, and retail businesses.

The use of cloth face coverings is not a substitute for other infection control measures, including social distancing, frequent hand washing and sanitizing, and cleaning of frequently touched surfaces. Child serving facilities should have a comprehensive prevention strategy that uses all available tools to reduce risk to staff, parents/guardians, and children in care.

The use of cloth face coverings by children should be guided by considerations which may impact a child's ability to wear a cloth face covering safely and consistently. Parents/guardians and other adults who are supervising children should determine the feasibility of having children wear cloth face coverings based upon the behavior of each child as well as the availability of supervision, or staff, to support the safe and consistent use of cloth face coverings.

II. Recommendations by Age

Consistent with guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the American Academy of Pediatrics:

- Children **under age 2** should not wear a face covering due to the risk of suffocation.
- Cloth face coverings are **recommended for children age 2-4** when feasible.
- Cloth face coverings are **strongly recommended for children ages 5 and above** as long as there are no health risks based on a child's medical condition.
- Cloth face coverings are **required for children over age 12**.

The recommendations for children ages 2 and older are especially important when children are indoors or when social distancing is difficult.

Children age 2 years and older who can wear a cloth face covering safely and consistently should wear one in accordance with [CDC guidance](#). There are a variety of [strategies](#) parents/guardians and child care providers can use to assist children with becoming comfortable wearing cloth face coverings. Parents/guardians are encouraged to practice these strategies at home to help their child become comfortable with wearing a cloth face covering prior to use of a cloth face covering in a child care/school/business setting.

Considerations for Parents/Guardians and Other Adults Supervising Children with Medical, Developmental or Behavioral Conditions

Under the following conditions, parents/guardians or other adults supervising children may determine that it is not in the child's best interest or within their capability to safely wear a cloth



face covering:

- Some children, particularly those under age 5 years, may not be developmentally capable of wearing a cloth face covering without frequent touching of the mask or their face or attempting to take the mask off, or be unable to remove it safely without assistance.
- Some children with developmental or behavioral conditions may have difficulty tolerating cloth face coverings.
- Some children with respiratory conditions, like uncontrolled asthma, or other medical problems may have difficulty breathing or have other safety concerns when wearing a cloth face covering.
- Some children with physical limitations may not be able to remove a cloth face covering without assistance.

Children should NOT wear a face covering:

- if the face covering presents a possible choking hazard (e.g., buttons, stickers, etc.) or strangulation risk (e.g., during certain activities or for certain children);
- if the child has difficulty breathing with the face covering on, or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the cover without assistance;
- if wearing the face covering puts the child at increased risk of being exposed to the virus because they are touching their face more frequently;
- if it causes the child significant anxiety or panic attacks due to a behavioral, developmental, or medical condition;
- while napping;
- during meal/snack times
- while playing outside if social distancing can be maintained.

How Cloth Face Coverings Should Be Worn

A cloth face covering should:

- be worn to cover the nose and mouth;
- never be worn around the neck or over the head;
- never be shared with other children;
- be stored in a paper bag with the child's name or replaced between uses if disposable; and
- be stored carefully if re-usable, to prevent cross-contamination when not being worn and should be washed as needed.

A cloth face covering should be removed:

- if a child is not able to maintain the covering on their face (e.g., keeps trying to touch or remove the face covering) or wear it safely;
- by the child for meals, snacks, naptime, outdoor play (when social distancing can be maintained) or when it needs to be replaced;
- and replaced if it becomes wet or soiled;
- and not replaced if the child experiences difficulty breathing.



Parents/guardians and other adults supervising children should:

- teach children to avoid touching the face covering or their face while wearing a cloth face covering, avoid removing the face covering without adult permission, and avoid sharing face coverings;
- wash their hands if they touch their face covering or their face;
- wash their hands before and after removing a face covering and before replacing a face covering;
- be careful not to touch their eyes, nose, and mouth when removing their face covering, and teach children not to touch their face either;
- ensure the child removes a face covering touching only the straps; if a child is unable to correctly remove his/her face covering, the decision to wear a face covering for that child should be reconsidered.

Family Responsibility for Providing Cloth Face Coverings

- For child serving settings, Parents/guardians should provide cloth face coverings for their own child/children. Parents/guardians should provide a sufficient supply of clean/unused cloth face coverings for their child each day to allow replacing the covering as needed and have a plan for routine cleaning of cloth face coverings.
- The number of cloth face coverings needed for each child will vary by child and by day.
- Parents/guardians should be sure the cloth face coverings are:
 - Clearly marked with the child's name and room number/teacher's name;
 - Clearly marked and/or designed to distinguish which side of the covering should be worn facing outwards so they are worn properly each day.

NOTE: If a parent supplies surgical face masks rather than cloth face coverings, they may also be used according to the guidance above.

Cleaning Instructions for Cloth Face Coverings

- Washing Machine - face coverings may be washed with regular laundry, using regular laundry detergent and the warmest appropriate water setting for the cloth used to make the face covering.
- Washing by Hand – may be done by preparing a bleach solution. Follow this guidance from the [CDC for preparing the solution](#).
- Drying:
 - In the dryer: use the highest heat setting and leave in the dryer until completely dry.
 - Air Drying: lay flat and allow to completely dry. If possible, place the cloth face covering in direct sunlight.

2. Industry Specific Guidance

Child Care

- All child care providers and/or staff working in child care facilities must wear cloth face



coverings while at work.

- Children **under age 2** should NOT wear face coverings.
- Children age 2 years and older who can wear a cloth face covering safely and consistently should wear one in accordance with [CDC guidance](#). There are a variety of [strategies](#) parents/guardians and child care providers can use to assist children with becoming comfortable wearing cloth face coverings. Parents/guardians are encouraged to practice these strategies at home to help their child become comfortable with wearing a cloth face covering prior to use of a cloth face covering in a child care.
- Cloth face coverings are **recommended for children ages 2-4** when feasible.
- It is **strongly recommended that children ages 5-12** in child care wear face coverings, if doing so will not either pose a health risk to them, encourage unnecessary touching of the face, create behavioral challenges, or if they cannot safely put on and take off the face covering.
- Face coverings are **required for children older than age 12**.
- A child should not wear a face covering if it poses any health risks, such as choking, strangulation, difficulty breathing, constant touching of the face, or inability to remove or put on a mask without assistance.
- Face coverings should never be worn during nap time or during meals and may be removed for outdoor activities if social distancing can be maintained.
- For questions or guidance, child care facilities should contact HSPContact@delaware.gov.
- Parents/guardians and child care staff should discuss the considerations in this document for each individual child, and consult with the child's health care provider if necessary (e.g., for children with certain conditions such as asthma), to determine if an individual child is able to safely and consistently wear a cloth face covering while in child care.

Summer School

- All educators and/or staff working with students in summer school must wear cloth face coverings while at work.
- **Children under age 2** should NOT wear face coverings.
- Children age 2 years and older who can wear a cloth face covering safely and consistently should wear one in accordance with [CDC guidance](#). There are a variety of [strategies](#) parents/guardians and school staff can use to assist children with becoming comfortable wearing cloth face coverings. Parents/guardians are encouraged to practice these strategies at home to help their child become comfortable with wearing a cloth face covering prior to use of a cloth face covering in a school/summer school setting.
- Cloth face **coverings are recommended for children ages 2-4** when feasible.
- It is **strongly recommended that children ages 5-12** wear face coverings, if doing so will not either pose a health risk to them, encourage unnecessary touching of the face, create behavioral challenges, or if they cannot safely put on and take off the face covering.
- **Students over age 12 must wear face coverings** unless there is a health reason why they should not.
- Face coverings should not be worn while eating or during naptime and may be removed safely for outdoor activities if social distancing can be maintained.



- Parents/guardians and school staff should discuss the considerations in this document for each individual child, and consult with the child's health care provider if necessary (e.g., for children with certain conditions such as asthma), to determine if an individual child is able to safely and consistently wear a cloth face covering while in summer school.

Summer Camp

- All staff working in summer camps must wear cloth face coverings while at work.
- Children **under age 2** should NOT wear face coverings.
- Children age 2 years and older who can wear a cloth face covering safely and consistently should wear one in accordance with [CDC guidance](#). There are a variety of [strategies](#) parents/guardians and camp counselors can use to assist children with becoming comfortable wearing cloth face coverings. Parents/guardians are encouraged to practice these strategies at home to help their child become comfortable with wearing a cloth face covering prior to use of a cloth face covering in a camp setting.
- Cloth face coverings are **recommended for children ages 2-4** when feasible.
- It is **strongly recommended that children ages 5-12** in camps wear face coverings, if doing so will not either pose a health risk to them, encourage unnecessary touching of the face, create behavioral challenges, or if they cannot safely put on and take off the face covering.
- **Children over age 12 must wear face coverings** unless there is a health reason why they should not.
- Face coverings should not be worn while eating or while outside if social distancing can be maintained.
- Parents/guardians and camp staff should discuss the considerations above and in this document for each individual child, and consult with the child's health care provider if necessary (e.g., for children with certain conditions such as asthma), to determine if an individual child is able to safely and consistently wear a cloth face covering while in camp.

Businesses and Other Establishments

- Children **under age 2** should NOT wear face coverings.
- Face coverings are **recommended for children ages 2-4** when feasible.
- It is **strongly recommended that children ages 5-12** wear face coverings, if doing so will not either pose a health risk to them, encourage unnecessary touching of the face, create behavioral challenges, or if they cannot safely put on and take off the face covering.
- **Children over age 12 must wear a face covering**, unless there is a health reason why they cannot.
- Face coverings should not be worn while eating or while outside if social distancing can be maintained.