



Use of Face Coverings in Great Falls Public Schools' Buildings: *Revised 8/21/2020*

Great Falls Public Schools has set the following guidance in regards to the usage of face coverings:

All staff, visitors and students **must** wear a cloth face covering when they come into a school or district building and must wear that face covering whenever they are in common areas and as directed in this protocol.

Staff, visitors and students will wear the cloth face covering when they enter the building, while in hallways, classrooms, or bathrooms, and when in any shared areas (including classrooms). Masks and cloth face coverings must be school appropriate.

We acknowledge that throughout the course of a day individuals may feel the need to take a break from their mask. Below is guidance on what will be termed, "mask breaks":

- If an individual is in their office or classroom by themselves they may take their mask off.
- If a student is in a classroom and needs to have a break from their mask they may remove their mask as long as they are physically distanced from others (6 feet minimum), seated at their desk and working quietly on an independent activity. We recommend that mask breaks do not exceed 5 minutes for an individual.
- At no time should all students in a classroom have their masks off. If there is a need for a large number of people to take a brief break, it is advised that students be physically distanced (6 feet minimum) and that teachers attempt to stagger students, not to exceed >25% of students being without a mask at one time.
- Students may remove their mask to take a drink of water while at their desk.
- Mask breaks are not allowed while individuals are moving around the classroom or the building.
- Teachers may remove their face coverings to aid in classroom instruction and voice projection. If a teacher removes their mask for these purposes they should maintain at least 6 feet of physical distance from their students. Face shields can also be used as an alternative to aid in instruction. Teachers must have a face covering when returning to 1:1 instruction or moving around their classroom.
- When individuals are engaged in physical activity (i.e. HPE, sports, and recess), they may remove their mask. *Please see specific departmental guidelines for further masking protocols related to sports and HPE.*
- Students may remove their mask while seated and eating lunch.

For health-compromised staff or students, the District will offer additional Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to the health-compromised individuals upon request and/or as needed to promote healthy school environments.

Students and staff will be provided accommodations for face mask and cloth coverings, on an individual basis. Such accommodations could include:

- Face shields
- Buffs
- Plexiglass dividers

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

Who should wear a face covering?

- Governor Bullock issued a Face Covering Mandate (July 15, 2020) requiring anyone over the age of 5 to wear a face covering in counties where there are more than 4 active COVID cases. In counties with fewer cases the use of face coverings is strongly encouraged. Governor Bullock has also given specific guidance that this directive includes school buildings.
- The CDC, US Surgeon General, and City-County Health Department is currently recommending that children over the age of 2 and adults wear some sort of cloth face covering when out in public. (Note: children under the age of 2, anyone with difficulty breathing, or someone who is unable to remove the mask/covering themselves should NOT wear a cloth covering)
- Medical grade face masks are to be worn by healthcare professionals.

Why are we being required to wear a face covering?

- The use of face coverings is another mitigating measure, like hand washing and social distancing, to help reduce transmission of COVID-19.
- Evidence is showing that some individuals who have the COVID-19 virus do not show symptoms, but can still spread the virus through their coughs and respiratory droplets. Others may be developing symptoms while in public and could be sharing the virus through these droplets. Wearing a mask helps reduce the chances of these droplets infecting others.
- Face masks also help remind us to not touch our face. If you have “germs” or the COVID-19 virus on your hands and then touch your eyes, nose, mouth the virus can enter your body and potentially make you sick.

When can I take off my face covering?

- If you are alone in a private office or classroom setting you may take your mask off.
- Students may be allowed mask breaks as directed above.
- When teaching or presenting, as long as you are at least 6 feet away from all others.

What if I have a medical condition that prevents me from wearing a mask?

- If you have a medical condition that prevents you from wearing a mask, you should notify Human Resources or your supervisor. If you are a student, please notify your principal or the school nurse privately.
 - Few medical conditions would preclude wearing a mask and would typically be related to a lung condition called COPD or emphysema.
 - If you are unable to tolerate a mask related to a medical condition, you should wear a face shield. While not as effective as a cloth face covering, this affords others some protection from the wearer.

Do I have to provide my own face mask?

- We would ask all employees to find a mask that suits them best in fit and taste. If you do not have the ability to acquire a mask, GFPS will provide you a mask and will have face coverings readily available for all staff, students and visitors. If you are currently unable to acquire your own face covering, they will be available at each of our school locations or you may contact GFPS Lead Transportation & Safety Technician, Jerry Austill @ Jerry_Austill@gfps.k12.mt.us.

Do I need to wear my mask outdoors?

Answers for Staff:

- In general, being outdoors with the increase of fresh air circulation, decreases but doesn't negate the risk of COVID-19 transmission.
- Athletics & Other Outdoor Activities
 - It is acceptable for staff to remove their cloth face covering when outside AND when all other people are more than 6 feet away from them AND when others are actively engaged so as not to unexpectedly come within 6 feet of the staff member when their cloth face covering is removed.
- Recess Duty, Class Outdoors, etc.
 - In general, these activities require staff to be readily available to students, it may be unpredictable when a student may quickly come within 6 feet of the staff member or if the staff member may need to aid the student and not be able to stay 6 feet apart. Staff are encouraged to continuously wear their cloth face covering in these situations for these reasons.

Answers for Students

- When students are engaged in physical activity they may remove their masks.
- If students are congregating in social groups while outside then their mask should be on.
- If outdoor spaces are used as alternative classroom settings then students should still physically distance themselves as able and wear their mask.

PROPER STEPS IN USING A FACE MASK:

1. Make sure your mask has been washed/laundered and is clean prior to wearing it.
2. Wash or sanitize your hands.
3. Put the face mask on. (It should fit securely around your ears, cover your nose and mouth).
4. While wearing the face mask try not to touch it. If the mask needs to be adjusted then wash or sanitize your hands before and after touching the mask.
5. When removing the mask, try not to touch your face with your hands or the outside of the mask.
6. If you are going to take your mask off for a short time period have a designated paper or zip top bag that is clean to place your mask in. If you need to fold the mask, please make sure that the outside of the mask does not touch the inside area that goes against your face. Do not put the mask in your pocket or purse.
7. Practice hand hygiene after removing your mask.
8. Wash your face mask after every day of use if possible. Hand wash or wash on the gentle cycle with hot, soapy water. Allow the mask to air dry or dry on gentle cycle in dryer.

Face Covering Information Sheet: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/cloth-face-coverings-information.pdf>

Workplace decision tool: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/workplace-decision-tool.html>

Decision Tree for Schools: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/Schools-Decision-Tree.pdf>

References:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020, April 9). *Use of Cloth Face Coverings to Help Slow the Spread of COVID-19*. Retrieved April 10, 2020 from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>

Cleveland Clinic. (2020, April 7). *Unsure About Actually Wearing a Face Mask? Here's How (and Why) to Do It*. Retrieved April 10, 2020 from https://health.clevelandclinic.org/unsure-about-actually-wearing-a-face-mask-heres-how-and-why-to-do-it/?utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter&utm_campaign=cc+tweets

Office of the Governor, State of Montana (Steve Bullock). *Directive Implementing Executive Orders 2-2020 and 3-2020 and Providing for the Mandatory Use of Face Coverings in Certain Settings*. (2020, July 15). <https://dphhs.mt.gov/Portals/85/Documents/NewsLetters/MaskDirective.pdf>

World Health Organization. (2020, March 19). *Getting Your Workplace Ready for COVID-19*. Retrieved May 20, 2020 from <https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/advice-for-workplace-clean-19-03-2020.pdf>