



BUFFALO PUBLIC SCHOOLS DIVISION OF STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Mask and/ or Face Shield Exemption During In-person Instruction

Purpose: To identify students who have medical, sensory, or behavioral concerns necessitating an exemption from the face covering requirement.

From the BOE 2020-2021 District Code of Conduct Addendum (Covid-19):

During the COVID-19 pandemic, students have a responsibility to: Wear a face mask or covering (unless the student has a documented medical exemption from wearing a mask), which covers the student's mouth and nose, while in school or when using bus transportation, on the way to and from school. This requirement may be altered when students are eating meals at school.

EXCEPTION: Students with a documented medical condition and/or disability may be exempt from wearing a face mask or covering if it would impair their health or mental health, or present a challenge, distraction, or obstruction to education services and instruction.

As the Buffalo Public School District returns students to in-person learning for the 2021-2022 school year, it is necessary to support students who have a medical exemption from the safety protocol of wearing a face covering.

Students unable to wear a face mask, for medical reasons, may be permitted to wear a face shield. Students unable to wear a face covering for medically documented reasons may receive a written approval for a mask exemption.

Populations who may be considered to be exempt:

- Persons with a documented medical condition, mental health condition, or disability that prevents them from tolerating a face mask or shield covering.
 - This may include students:
 - Who are not able to remove a mask independently (ex. may have cerebral palsy, etc.),
 - For whom wearing a face covering could obstruct their breathing and/or,

- That are hearing impaired or communicating with a person who is hearing impaired, where the ability to see the mouth is essential. (Note: a face shield or mask with a clear mouth must be considered before moving to an exemption.)

Considerations:

- Principals and the School's Nurse will be informed of all approvals for mask exemptions.
- Families will notified, via the Division of Student Support Services, of all approvals and non-approvals for mask exemptions.
- All requests for medical exemptions will be considered on an individual basis.
- The parent/ caregiver will be required to provide:
 - Up to date (within 60 days) signed medical documentation on doctor's letterhead including stating the specific diagnosis (reason) why the student must be considered for a mask face shield exemption. The signature must be from a practicing: Licensed Independent Practitioner (LIP) including a Doctor of Medicine (MD), Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (DO), Physician Assistant (PA) or a Certified Nurse Practitioner (CNP).
 - It should also state if they are able to wear a face shield as an alternative and if not, the reason why. The LIP must be someone who provides ongoing care for the child.
- Documentation will be reviewed by a Medical Advisory Team and/or Legal Counsel to determine if the mask exemption will be granted.
- Approved students will be provided a mask exemption pass so that others are aware of their approved mask exemption.
- The vast majority of students with an underlying medical condition/disability including asthma can safely wear a mask.

The Buffalo Public Schools retains the right to revert to a universal masking policy at any point deemed necessary.

References:

[https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/default/files/atoms/files/Pre-K to Grade 12 Schools MasterGuidance.pdf](https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/default/files/atoms/files/Pre-K%20to%20Grade%2012%20Schools%20MasterGuidance.pdf)

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover-guidance.html#evidence-effectiveness>

School Responsibilities:

1. Verify that the school's nurse has a written copy of a student's mask approval or denial (a hard copy should be maintained for the school year, in a folder or binder in a secured area).
2. Ensure that all classrooms or areas that an unmasked student may encounter (including restrooms, libraries, main office, etc.) has signage reminding students and staff to continue adhering to safety protocols as a measure of protecting themselves through:
 - a. Wearing a mask, if the student or staff member does not have an approved exemption from wearing a face mask or shield;
 - b. Maintaining a safe 6 ft. from all persons including those not wearing a mask or face shield;
 - c. Using respiratory etiquette at all times
 - d. Frequently washing their hands.
3. The principal may ask a parent to voluntarily disclose if the unmasked student has been vaccinated against COVID-19.
4. Principal may need to consider how staffing, where at all possible, will be considered, in a way that will adhere to best practice safety measures.
5. Ensure that the unmasked student receives a temperature reading each day that he or she enters the school building.
6. Receive a School Health Screener for the unmasked student, daily to indicate any possible interaction that the student may have had with someone who may be COVID-19 infected.
7. Maintain medical confidentiality for the student who is unmasked, not sharing any medical specifics with staff, students, school partners, or parents (the principal may conference with the school's nurse).
8. The principal will speak with the student's parent to request that the parent reinforce to their child to not discuss their medical situation with peers, staff, etc.
 - a. The principal will also speak with the student to reinforce this.
9. The principal may request a training for staff on safety protocols for interacting with unmasked students from the Division of Student Support Services (Dr. Williams). Trainings may be offered during: faculty meetings, grade level or common planning times.