



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Robert R. Neall, Secretary

STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Dr. Karen Salmon, State Superintendent of Schools

Interim Guidance for Use of Cloth Face Coverings in Child Care Programs

Updated April 23, 2020

To prevent the spread of COVID-19, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends the use of cloth face coverings in child care settings **when feasible**. This guidance has been developed by the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) and Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to assist child care providers with implementing the use of cloth face coverings within their programs.

The use of cloth face coverings is not a substitute for other infection control measures including social distancing, frequent hand washing, and cleaning of frequently touched surfaces within the child care setting.

Cloth Face Coverings for Adults

Most healthy adults should be able to wear cloth face coverings safely and consistently in a child care setting; if an adult has questions or concerns about wearing a cloth face covering, they should discuss this with their health care provider.

- Child care staff should wear cloth face coverings throughout the work day while in the child care center or family child care home in accordance with [CDC guidance](#);
- Child care staff and parents should wear cloth face coverings during drop-off and pick-up and when parents are performing, and staff are observing, temperature checks; and
- Parents and any other adults who must enter the child care center or child care home related to essential child care operations should wear cloth face coverings while in the child care site.

Cloth Face Coverings for Children

The use of cloth face coverings by children in a child care setting should be guided by the following considerations which impact a child's ability to wear a cloth face covering safely and consistently. Each child care program should determine the feasibility of implementing the use of cloth face coverings based upon the characteristics of the children in its care as well as the availability of staff to support the safe and consistent use of cloth face coverings by children.



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The child care program may identify other program or child specific considerations when determining feasibility of implementing the use of cloth face coverings in child care programs.

- **Cloth face coverings should NOT be placed on young children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance;**
- 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 or other medical problems may have difficulty breathing or have other safety concerns when wearing a cloth face covering; and
- Some children with physical limitations may not be able to remove a cloth face covering without assistance.

Parents and child care staff should discuss the considerations above for an 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 age 5 years and older is able to safely and consistently wear a cloth face covering while in child care.

When feasible, children age 5 years and older who can wear a cloth face covering safely and consistently should wear a cloth face covering while in the child care center or family child care home in accordance with [CDC guidance](#). There are a variety of [strategies](#) parents and child care providers can use to assist children with becoming comfortable wearing cloth face coverings. Parents 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 the child care setting.

Additional Safety Precautions Regarding the Use of Cloth Face Coverings in Child Care Programs

- Cloth face coverings should **NOT** have any attachments (e.g., buttons, stickers, etc.) that may be a choking hazard;



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- Cloth face coverings should **NOT** be worn if they are a strangulation risk (e.g., during certain activities or for certain children);
- Children should **NOT** wear cloth face coverings while napping;
- Children should **NOT** wear cloth face coverings while playing outside if social distancing can be maintained; and
- Children should **NOT** be forced to wear a cloth face covering if they are not comfortable/able to do so safely or show signs of breathing difficulty.

How Cloth Face Coverings Should Be Worn and When to Remove

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;
- Never be reused unless it is stored properly between uses and can be replaced safely;
- **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;**
- Be removed **by the child** for meals, snacks, naptime, outdoor play (when social distancing can be maintained) or when it needs to be replaced;
- Be removed and replaced if it becomes wet or soiled; and
- Be removed (and not replaced) if the child experiences difficulty breathing.

NOTE: Child care providers should observe frequently throughout the day and document daily that each child's cloth face coverings are worn as noted above.

Procedures for Use of Cloth Face Coverings

- Child care staff should teach children to avoid touching the face covering or their face while wearing a cloth face covering and avoid removing the face covering without adult permission share face coverings;
- **Staff and children should wash their hands if they touch their face covering or their face;**
- Staff and children should wash hands **before and after removing a face covering and before replacing a face covering;**
- Staff and children should be careful not to touch their eyes, nose, and mouth when removing their face covering;



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- When removing a cloth face covering, child care staff and children should be sure to remove the 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;

- A cloth face covering should be removed for meals, snacks, naptime, or outdoor play or when it needs to be replaced; and
- Cloth face coverings should be placed in a clean paper bag (marked with the child's name and date) when removed until the face covering needs to be put on again; multiple face coverings should not be put into the same bag unless they will not be used again prior to cleaning.

Family Responsibility for Providing Cloth Face Coverings

Parents should provide cloth face coverings for their own child/children. Parents 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. If a child does not have an adequate supply of cloth face coverings on a particular day, the child may remain in care but the program should inform the parent that additional face coverings are needed.

Parents 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.