

Background Information: *As a safety condition, all individuals, including both state employees and members of the public, should properly wear face masks while in state facilities. This requirement applies to:*

- *All indoors spaces including common spaces, stairwells, kitchenettes, hallways, corridors, restrooms, break rooms, elevators, cubicles, offices, and conference rooms regardless of the number of additional people present or physical space between individuals*
- *Times in which employees may be waiting in line to enter the building*
- *Occasions in which employees are visiting enclosed buildings, while on business for the State*

Additionally, face coverings are strongly recommended for all individuals when outdoors on state-managed property in situations when it is not possible to maintain six feet of physical distancing. Employees will also continue to adhere to agency direction if additional or different personal protective equipment has been provided by the agency. Employees who are unable to wear a mask should be directed to human resources for further assistance. These reasons may include a medical or mental health condition, disability, or job duties in which wearing a face covering would cause a health or safety risk.

1. Do I need to wear a mask indoors even if I can physically distance at all times?

Yes, masks are required at all times to help control the spread of COVID-19 within the worksite and the communities in which we live.

2. If I already had COVID-19 or tested negative do I have to wear a mask?

Yes. Everyone must wear a face mask.

3. Is a space that has some open walls considered an outdoor space?

No, a space must be completely open on all sides to be outdoors. Opening windows does not create an outdoor space.

4. How do I wear a mask while I'm eating or drinking?

Employees are permitted to remove masks while eating and drinking but should wear them when retrieving food from the refrigerator, vending machine, reheating or otherwise preparing food.

5. I am not able to wear a mask due to a medical condition, mental health reason, or disability. What should I do?

Employees who are unable to wear a mask due to a medical or mental health condition, or disability, should contact their human resources representative (e.g., medical, or reasonable accommodation coordinator) to complete a reasonable accommodation request. Medical documentation is not necessarily required. Employees who need to provide medical documentation will be advised during the process.

6. I am not able to wear a mask based on a religious belief. What should I do?

Employees who are unable to wear a mask based on a religious belief should contact their human resources representative to discuss accommodation. Employees may be required to submit documentation for management to review an accommodation request based on a religious belief.

7. Can I wear a face shield instead of a face mask?

No. According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), it is not known if face shields provide protection to others from the spray of respiratory particles. CDC does not recommend use of face shields for normal everyday activities or as a substitute for cloth face coverings.

However, a face shield may be permitted for staff who have difficulty breathing through a mask or have received guidance from a medical provider. In this instance, the employee should discuss their concerns with human resources.

8. Communication is an essential part of my job and I'm concerned that if I can't communicate clearly because of the face covering then I will not have effectively done my job. What should I do?

While all employees communicate on a regular basis, there are some instances when the effectiveness of the communication could be affected by wearing a mask. Employees may remove their mask in this instance when at least six feet from the other person and where other alternatives will not work, e.g. written communication, etc. Masks may also be removed to improve communication with others who rely on lip-reading, etc. for communication. Employees may also wish to consider a clear mask to assist with communication issues.

There may be other instances when a face mask may impede in one's ability to effectively do one's job. If you have such concerns, we encourage you to consult with your supervisor or human resources.

9. My goggles or glasses fog up when I wear a mask. What can I do?

[Here are some tips.](#)

10. What do I do if I see someone not wearing a mask, even though they should be?

Nothing. Some people have conditions or circumstances that would make wearing a cloth face covering difficult or dangerous. Just wear your mask and stay six feet away. If you remain concerned, you can talk to your supervisor or human resources.

11. Are there any other exceptions to the mask requirement? (Update 04/20/2021)

- Employees who work in a setting where cloth face coverings may increase the risk of [heat-related illness](#) or cause safety concerns due to introduction of a hazard (for instance, straps getting caught in equipment) may consult with an occupational safety and health professional to determine the appropriate face covering for their setting.
- As permitted by your agency, while working alone in your own private office or a conference room **with the door closed** you do not need to wear a mask, provided you can put on a face covering quickly if someone enters. If the door is open or you leave your office, you are required to wear a mask. Employees are reminded to wipe down surfaces in their office with available disinfectant spray before leaving for the day. If you remove your mask in a conference room, you must sanitize hard surfaces and anything you touch in a conference room both upon entering and before vacating the space.
- Employees who choose to disclose their vaccine status and are fully vaccinated may meet with other fully vaccinated employees indoors without wearing face coverings or physical distancing, so long as all such employees in the meeting are comfortable doing so. *Note: Employees are considered "vaccinated" if they have completed their vaccine series (two doses for Pfizer and Moderna vaccine; one dose for Janssen/Johnson & Johnson vaccine) and at least two weeks have passed since their final dose.*

12. My job is indoors and outdoors, what should I do?

Employees are required to wear masks when indoors but may remove the mask when outdoors and when social distancing is possible.

13. If I participate in the state's van pool (ride share), do I need to wear a mask while in the vehicle?

Yes, you must wear a mask.

14. If a member of the public is not wearing a mask, can I deny them service? (Updated 04/20/2021)

No, although signage at state facilities will ask that members of the public properly wear a mask, the State will not deny service for this reason. Members of the public should follow their local health department's guidance regarding the use of masks. Part of the reason to require employees to wear masks is to ensure the employee's personal protection. Masks will be available to members of the public doing business with the State.

15. If I cannot deny service to a member of the public without a mask, can I ask them to wear a mask or to explain why they are not wearing a mask? (Updated 04/20/2020)

Signage at state facilities will make clear to members of the public that they are being asked to wear a mask, and so employees should not also ask or require members of the public to wear a mask. Additionally, employees may not ask members of the public if they meet the exception criteria or require them to explain why they are not wearing a mask. State employees are not responsible for ensuring the public's compliance with health or emergency orders and will respect individuals' privacy, which may include medical information or personal history. As a reminder, employees should similarly not be making these inquiries of their co-workers.

16. I work in a position where I interact directly with the public and although I am wearing a mask, I am concerned about interacting with a member of the public or a co-worker who is not wearing a mask. What should I do?

Masks help to protect both the person wearing the mask as well as anyone they interact with. If you encounter someone who is not wearing a mask, maintain social distancing and stay behind protective barriers (plastic shields/windows/etc.) where possible. You can also talk to your supervisor or human resources about additional options or additional personal protective equipment.

17. Is it true that I could be subject to discipline for refusing to wear a mask if I do not have an approved reasonable accommodation? (Updated 04/20/2021)

Yes, as is true for any required protective equipment, employees who refuse to wear a mask without authorization to do so may be subject to discipline up to and including termination. While we will make every effort to work with the personal circumstances of each employee, this has been a requirement for all employees since July 13, 2020.

18. Are employees required to continue to wear masks even though the statewide order has ended? (Updated 11/12/2020)

The mask requirement implemented on July 13th is a protective measure to help ensure the health and safety of our workforce and the members of the public to whom we provide service. Even though the statewide Emergency Order has ended, mask requirements will remain until it is determined to be a measure no longer needed to help protect the health and safety of our workforce. Employees will be notified of this change.