



Book	Policy Manual
Section	Policies Adopted by the Board
Title	MANDATORY FACE COVERINGS DURING COVID-19 EMERGENCY
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0121ER-2020V2 - **MANDATORY FACE COVERINGS DURING COVID-19 EMERGENCY**

Whereas, the State of Florida has been under a declared state of emergency as result of the COVID-19 pandemic since March 9, 2020.

Whereas, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that everyone wash their hands often, avoid close contact, and cover their mouth and nose with a cloth face cover when social distancing measures are difficult to maintain. See <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>.

Whereas, the wearing of facial coverings is required in Alachua County under the First Amendment to Emergency Order 20-30. See <https://alachuacounty.us/Depts/Communications/Documents/ADACompliant/EO%2020-30%20Phase%202%20Order%20First%20Amendment%20signature.pdf>.

Therefore, pursuant to the authority of the School Board under Article IX, section 4 of the Florida Constitution, as well as sections 1001.32, 1001.41, 1001.42, and 1001.43, Florida Statutes, the School Board of Alachua County adopts the following emergency policy:

During times of elevated communicable disease community spread (pandemic or epidemic), the Superintendent will issue periodic guidance through School Board plans/resolution(s) in alignment with public health officials and/or in accordance with government edicts and including any Pandemic Plan developed by the District's Pandemic Response Team. (See also Policy 8420.01 - *Epidemics and Pandemics*.)

School settings can be a source of community spread. Wearing face masks/coverings is especially important during these times and can help mitigate the risk of exposure from person to person.

As such, during times of elevated communicable disease community spread, the Superintendent may activate this policy by notifying the school community, requiring all school staff, volunteers and visitors (including vendors) to wear appropriate face masks/coverings on school grounds unless it is unsafe to do so or where doing so would significantly interfere with the Districts educational or operational processes.

Face masks/coverings will be provided by the District to employees and students, as necessary. Individuals may elect to wear their own face coverings if they meet the requirements of this policy as well as any requirements issued by State or local health departments.

In addition, the Board may require students to wear a face mask unless they are unable to do so for a health, sensory, or developmental reason. Efforts will be made to reduce any social stigma for a student who, for medical or developmental reasons, cannot and should not wear a mask. Children in kindergarten and below will be educated, encouraged and expected to wear face coverings, but failure to wear a face covering will not prohibit their attendance if they are unable to wear a face covering at all times.

If face masks/coverings are required, and no exception is applicable, students who refuse to wear a face mask/covering, in accordance with policies of the Board, may be reassigned by the Superintendent to an online/virtual learning environment if the Superintendent determines that reassignment is necessary to protect the health and safety of the student or others.

All students and staff are required to wear masks while being transported on District school buses or other modes of school transportation.

School nurses or staff who care for individuals with symptoms consistent with those of a communicable disease must use appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), provided by the school, in accordance with OSHA standards.

When facial masks/coverings are required by the Board, and no exception has been applied, staff members who violate this policy shall be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with policies of the Board or applicable collective bargaining agreement.

Use of Mask/Face Covering

Face coverings/mask should:

- A. fully cover the mouth, nose, and chin;
- B. fit snugly against the side of the face so there are no gaps;
- C. not create difficulty breathing while worn; and
- D. be held securely through either a tie, elastic, etc., to prevent slipping.

Facial masks/coverings generally should not include surgical masks or respirators unless medically indicated (as those should be reserved for healthcare workers) or masks designed to be worn for costume purposes. Additionally, facial masks/coverings with respiration valves or vents are prohibited.

All employee facial masks/coverings shall meet the requirements of the appropriate dress/staff grooming policies (Policies 1216/3216/4216). All student facial masks/coverings shall meet the requirements of the appropriate Student Code of Conduct and Policy 5511 - *Code of Student Conduct - Dress and Grooming*.

Any person may be required to temporarily remove a face mask or covering when instructed to do so for identification or security purposes. Failure to comply with such a request violates this policy and may lead to disciplinary or other action.

Exceptions

Exceptions to the use of masks/face coverings include:

- A. To promote the social and emotional health of students who may struggle wearing a face covering for several hours, schools will provide students with opportunities for breaks where they can remove their face covering while maintaining appropriate distancing and while under supervision.
- B. Wearing a face covering is not required while eating or drinking.
- C. Persons who have difficulty breathing or suffer sensory issues due to a documented medical or psychological issue will not be required to wear a face covering. If appropriate, they will be asked to wear a clear face shield, unless wearing the face shield would also cause breathing or sensory issues. Documentation from a medical provider must be on file before a person will be excused from this face covering requirement.
- D. Persons communicating with hearing-impaired individuals who need to see the other person's mouth to communicate will not be required to wear a face covering.
- E. Teachers, staff members, and students, at the direction of the teacher, may remove their face coverings when wearing them would impede instruction. Students participating in extracurricular activities, like athletics or marching band, where the wearing of face coverings is not practicable or may create a health risk will not be required to wear face coverings during the activity but must still follow any and all safety procedures in place for the activity. The district will follow all FHSAA guidance for athletic activities.
- F. When facial masks/coverings in the school setting are prohibited by law or regulation, are in violation of documented industry standards, or are in violation of the school's documented safety policies.
- G. When a staff member works alone in an assigned work area or when social distancing outside is maintained, as determined by an adult staff member.

The Board may be required to provide written justification to the local health officials upon request explaining why a staff member is not required to wear a facial covering in the school. Therefore, if any exceptions are made to the requirement for facial coverings, the request for such exception must be submitted in writing to the individual's supervisor with appropriate medical documentation provided. A decision on the request will be provided in writing.

All medical, sensory, or developmental exceptions to the face mask/covering requirement must be supported by appropriate medical documentation which includes an indication whether a face shield may be worn even if a face mask/covering cannot be.

Use of Face Shields

Face shields that wrap around the face and extend below the chin may be permitted as an alternative to face masks/coverings with permission of the Superintendent as the Board recognizes that face shields may be useful in some situations, including:

- A. When interacting with students, such as those with disabilities, where communication could be impacted;
- B. when interacting with English-language learners or when teaching a foreign language;
- C. settings where face masks/coverings might present a safety hazard (i.e. science labs); or
- D. for individuals who have difficulty wearing a face mask/covering for documented health, sensory, or developmental reasons.

If employees receive approval from the District administration after discussing their request not to wear a face mask/covering/shield due to a physical, mental or developmental health condition, and/or if wearing a mask/covering/shield would lead to a medical emergency or would introduce significant safety concerns, the District administration may also discuss other possible accommodations for the staff member. Such discussion shall follow Board policies and guidelines under the ADA.

This emergency policy was adopted on July 15, 2020 and amended on September 15, 2020. This policy will remain in effect for 90 days pending the adoption of a permanent policy on this subject.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: §§ 120.54(4), 120.81, 286.011, 286.0114, 1001.41; 1001.42; 1001.43, F.S.

LAWS IMPLEMENTED: §§ 1001.32; 1001.33; 1001.41; 1001.42; 1001.43, F.S.

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