

Schools and Face Coverings Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)



The listed categories in the FAQ are: [2021-2022 K-12 School Requirements](#), [2021-2022 K-12 School Recommendations](#), [2021-2022 K12 School Requirements and Recommendations](#), [Sports](#), [Physical Education \(PE\)](#), [Disability](#), [Accommodations](#), [Special Education](#), [Quarantine](#), [COVID-19 Testing](#), [Music](#), [Theater](#), and [Pick-up and Drop-off](#).

Category	Questions	Responses
<p>Category: 2021-2022 K-12 School Requirements</p>	<p>Question: Why the OHA Statewide mask requirement for K-12 Schools?</p>	<p>Response: Our goal is to ensure that every student in Oregon is able to attend school in-person, every school day for the entire school year. Students are required to attend school, which is a congregate setting where COVID-19 can spread easily if precautions are not taken. Oregon has seen a steep increase in COVID-19 rates and hospitalizations driven by <i>both</i> the Delta <i>and Omicron</i> variants. Schools also are still mostly unvaccinated settings. Universal and correct use of face coverings can keep students learning in-person by reducing infections and quarantines, especially when paired with other layered mitigation efforts. As COVID-19 impacts and conditions change, we must respond. The Delta variant <i>was</i> substantially more impactful than the COVID-19 we <i>had</i> seen in the past. There are more instances of “breakthrough cases” amongst vaccinated people due to changing variants compared to previous variants. It is more transmissible. The virus’s ability to spread quickly is especially worrisome because “only half of the children who are eligible are vaccinated,” said Jennifer Lighter, pediatric infectious-disease specialist at New York University Langone Health. Covid-19 and the flu in children have “the same kind of morbidity,” she said, but added, “If it’s preventable, I don’t want any child getting it.” Doctors say there isn’t a good sense yet about whether the Delta <i>or Omicron</i> variant is more severe for children long term than the previous versions of the coronavirus, because of a lack of data, but we know for adults (including younger adults) we are seeing an increase in hospitalizations. If the Omicron variant spreads through our schools it will also impact staff and student family</p>

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		members, some of whom may be at greater risk. Here, you can learn more from the CDC morbidity and mortality weekly report .
Category: 2021-2022 K-12 School Requirements	Question: Who is enforcing the K-12 mask mandate? What happens if there is failure of enforcement?	<p>Response: There are currently two pathways to enforcement of face covering requirements in schools: OAR 333-019-1015 adopted by OHA and the Oregon Safe Employment Act. OAR 333- 019-1015 is complaint driven. OROSHA will take the lead on responding to and investigating complaints. OHA and ODE will refer complaints to OROSHA for investigation under the Oregon Safe Employment Act. OROSHA would enforce under the Oregon Safe Employment Act and penalty structure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The process is complaint driven. ● Failure to enforce: Fine based on serious violations, including an assessment for size of the business in line with the Oregon Safe Employment Act; \$100 to \$2,600. ● Willful negligence: Fine based on size of the business, and would likely be on the higher end because of the larger size of many school districts; \$8,900 to \$126,749. ● Highest penalty: Would be for employers with a willful violation, and having more than 251 employees. ● Daily penalty for continued noncompliance: Could result in a failure to abate the citation with a minimum \$250 and a maximum \$12,675.
Category: 2021-2022 K-12 School Requirements	Question: What counts as a face-covering or mask?	Response: From the Oregon Health Authority : “A “face covering” means a cloth, polypropylene, paper or other face covering that covers the nose and the mouth and that rests snugly above the nose, below the mouth, and on the sides of the face.

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		The following are not face coverings because they allow droplets to be released: a covering that incorporates a valve that is designed to facilitate easy exhalation, mesh masks, lace masks, or other coverings with openings, holes, visible gaps in the design or material, or vents.”
Category: 2021-2022 K-12 School Requirements	Question: Why the shift from local control?	Response: Under Governor Brown’s Executive Order 21-15 we are still under a state of emergency related to COVID-19. Under ORS Chapter 431A, OHA has a responsibility/authority to protect public health. Page 2 of the 2021-2022 Resiliency Framework has stated since its June 25 release, “Changes in the amount of community transmission of COVID-19, the severity of illness associated with new variants of the SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes COVID-19, or the availability of vaccination for children younger than 12 years old may warrant changes to the state’s recovery efforts during the school year. The Resiliency Framework will be updated to reflect any changes.” This was written in order to remind Oregonians that we will evolve with any surprises to keep our schools safe, ready, and operating in-person. The potency of the Delta variant in this instance was the surprise that led to the making masks required statewide.
Category: 2021-2022 K-12 School Requirements	Question: What’s in the OAR rule exactly and why is OHA requiring this?	Response: Here is the link to the OHA rule. The Oregon Health Authority has the authority to adopt rules to prescribe measures and methods for controlling reportable diseases, including COVID-19. Children are required to attend school, which is a congregate setting where COVID-19 can spread easily if precautions are not taken. Two of the most important tools the state has to control COVID-19 are vaccination and masking. Currently children under the age of 12 are not eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccines authorized for emergency use. In order to protect students under age 12, individuals who are not vaccinated, and those with underlying health conditions that

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		<p>make them more susceptible to complications from COVID-19, as well as to minimize the disruption of student education in schools because of exposure to a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19, requiring universal use of masks inside schools is necessary.</p>
<p>Category: 2021-2022 K-12 School Requirements</p>	<p>Question: When is an individual not required to wear a mask indoors in schools?</p>	<p>Response: On August 12, 2021, OHA adopted OAR 333-019-1025 requiring everyone age 5 or older to wear a face covering anywhere indoors, including but not limited to public and private workplaces, businesses, indoor areas open to the public, building lobbies, common or shared spaces, classrooms, elevators, bathrooms, transportation services and other indoor space where people may gather for any purpose. On August 29, 2021, this rule was updated to require everyone age 5 or older to wear a face covering in outdoor gathering settings. Face coverings are not required when an individual is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Is under five years of age or not yet in kindergarten; unless an individual is using public transportation or in transportation hubs in which case an individual under two years of age is not required to wear a mask, face covering or face shield. ● Is sleeping. ● Is actively eating or drinking. ● Is engaged in an activity that makes wearing a mask, face covering or face shield not feasible, such as when actively swimming. ● Is in a private individual workspace. ● Must remove the mask, face covering or face shield briefly because the individual’s identity needs to be confirmed by visual comparison, such as at a bank or if interacting with law enforcement. ● Is practicing or playing a competitive sport at any level.

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Is officiating a competitive sport that requires a high level of physical exertion by the official. ● Is performing, including but not limited to playing music, delivering a speech to an audience, and theater. This exception does not apply to teaching. <p>OHA’s OAR 333-019-1015 also remains in effect. An individual is not required to wear a mask under section (3) of this rule if the individual is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Is under five years of age or not yet in kindergarten; unless an individual is using public transportation or in transportation hubs in which case an individual under two years of age is not required to wear a mask, face covering or face shield. ● Is sleeping. ● Is actively eating or drinking. ● Is engaged in an activity that makes wearing a mask, face covering or face shield not feasible, such as when actively swimming. ● Is in a private individual workspace. ● Must remove the mask or face covering briefly because the individual’s identity needs to be confirmed by visual comparison. ● Is practicing or playing a competitive sport at any level. ● Is officiating a competitive sport that requires a high level of physical exertion by the official. ● Is performing, including but not limited to playing music, delivering a speech to an audience, and theater. This exception does not apply to teaching.
<p>Category: 2021-2022 K-12 School Requirements</p>	<p>Question: When did the OHA K-12</p>	<p>Response: The rule became effective on August 2, 2021, and the rule is subject to enforcement beginning August 12, 2021. It should be applied to summer school and the beginning of the 2021-2022 academic year.</p>

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	mask mandate come into effect?	
Category: 2021-2022 K-12 School Requirements	Question: Are teachers allowed to take off their masks during instruction? Is this considered to be part of the speech mask exception?	Response: No. Teachers must wear a face covering indoors per the rule language. A recent study from an elementary school in Marin County reinforces the importance of teachers wearing a face covering at all times when teaching. In this study, a teacher wasn't vaccinated and had gone to work with really mild allergy-like symptoms. At brief points during the day, the teacher took their mask off to read out loud to the class. A test for COVID-19 virus came back positive, and soon after, half the class tested positive as well. And it wasn't just kids in that one classroom. The outbreak spread to other classrooms, siblings of students and even fully vaccinated parents. In fact, all told, there were 27 people infected.
Category: 2021-2022 K-12 School Requirements and Recommendations	Question: Are teachers able to wear face-shields while teaching phonics; teaching enunciation of words and sounds to students?	Response: Face-shields are only permitted for use when a medical exception to mask-wearing is allowed.
Category: 2021-2022 K-12 School Requirements	Question: What are the consequences to a student or family member not	Response: When students falter in consistently and correctly wearing a face covering, center grace and patience and reteach the expectation. Refrain from implementing consequences that deny access to instruction as a result of these challenges. Schools and teams should continually provide instruction and positive reinforcement to help all students adapt to the changes in school facilities while ensuring punitive measures are

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	<p>wearing a mask inside a school?</p>	<p>not the methodology to remind, motivate and reinforce healthy practices. In the case that a student or family chooses not to wear a face covering for reasons other than medical need or disability, schools should follow district processes to determine how to respond keeping in mind both the responsibility for health and safety and the student’s need to access education. Conversations should be progressive and lead to resolution that ideally does not involve suspension. Schools cannot serve a student in-person if they or their family choose not to wear a face covering. Schools may offer a remote or online school option for the student.</p>
<p>Category: 2021-2022 K-12 School Requirements</p>	<p>Question: Why did the CDC change its guidance between July 9th and July 29th? Why did Oregon change course too?</p>	<p>Here are a variety of sources that guided decision making with additional information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 8-1-21 Your Local Epidemiologist - Advocating for kids: Resources that can help ● 7-22-21 Washington Post - The delta variant and kids: Parents’ questions answered ● 7-27-21 National Geographic - Here's why the CDC reversed course on masks indoors—and how it might affect you ● 7-30-21 Fast Company - How school leaders are dealing with ugly outrage over COVID-19 policies ● 8-1-21 Education Week - A View From the Hot Seat: How One District Leader Is Confronting COVID-19's Latest Twists ● 7-30-21 New York Times - C.D.C. Internal Report Calls Delta Variant as Contagious as Chickenpox ● 7-29-21 Washington Post - ‘The war has changed’: Internal CDC document urges new messaging, warns delta infections likely more severe ● 7-29-21 Newsweek - Smithsonian, Disney World Now Requiring Masks

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		Following CDC Guidelines
Category: 2021-2022 K-12 School Requirements	Question: Is the OHA Mask Mandate rule for the full 2021-2022 academic year?	Response: No. The goal is to go back to local decision-making. OHA will continue to review the need for the rule and will rescind or repeal the rule as soon as it is safe to do so. However, the virus sets the timeline. And, we all know that even when we shift back to local decision-making, masks will still be the strongest mitigation tool for the unvaccinated and will help secure the continuity of education.
Category: 2021-2022 K-12 School Recommendations	Question: Are masks required at the district office and other non-school sites? What about School Board Meetings?	Response: Yes. On August 12, 2021, OHA adopted OAR 333-019-1025 requiring everyone age 5 or older to wear a face covering anywhere indoors, including but not limited to public and private workplaces, businesses, indoor areas open to the public, building lobbies, common or shared spaces, classrooms, elevators, bathrooms, transportation services and other indoor space where people may gather for any purpose.
Category: 2021-2022 K-12 School Requirements and Recommendations	Question: What happens if a student or family member chooses not to wear a mask?	Response: When students falter in consistently and correctly wearing a face covering, center grace and patience and reteach the expectation. Schools and teams should continually provide instruction and positive reinforcement to help all students adapt to the changes in school facilities. In the case that a student or family chooses not to wear a face covering for reasons other than medical need or disability, schools should follow district processes to determine how to respond keeping in mind both the responsibility for health and safety and the student’s need to access education. Conversations should be progressive and lead to resolution that ideally does not involve suspension. Schools cannot serve a student in-person if they or their family choose not to wear a face covering. Schools may offer a remote or online school option for the student. Per current OHA rule and guidance, it is acceptable for both fully vaccinated and unvaccinated people to be outdoors without a face covering. A face shield may be worn

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		<p>instead of a mask if an individual cannot wear a mask for medical reasons. Face coverings are preferred over face shields, as they provide better containment of small respiratory droplets that can be produced while talking.</p>
<p>Category: 2021-2022 K-12 School Requirements and Recommendations</p>	<p>Question: Is Oregon in CDC compliance? Who is doing the same things as Oregon?</p>	<p>Response: From the CDC: <i>“This guidance emphasizes implementing layered prevention strategies to protect students, teachers, staff, visitors, and other members of their households and support in-person learning.” CDC recommends universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors to K-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status. Students benefit from in-person learning, and safely returning to in-person instruction continues to be the priority.</i> This has guided Ready Schools, Safe Learners when creating the 2021-2022 Resiliency Framework. With Oregon’s current uptick in <i>Omicron</i> variant COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations, <i>OHA continues to implement</i> statewide universal masking in indoor K12 settings. We are counting on local districts to add layered mitigation protocols. Our neighboring states in Washington and California are following the same guidelines. Oregon’s policy will <i>continue to</i> be reviewed and will be <i>rescinded or repealed as soon as it is safe to do so, shifting back</i> to local decision-making. Oregon’s K12 face covering requirement also aligns with recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Oregon Pediatric Society and the Oregon Academy of Family Physicians.</p>
<p>Category: 2021-2022 K-12 School Requirements and Recommendations</p>	<p>Question: What is required and what is advisory?</p>	<p>Response: Locally published and submitted plan for operations, communicable disease plan*, isolation space*, recovery services process, quarantine/isolation protocols, exclusion for exposed individuals*, indoor face masks, Division 22 rules*, are all requirements. All other decisions are local. ODE and OHA strongly recommend multiple, layered mitigation protocols to limit the spread, protect health, and maintain continuity of in-person instruction.</p> <p>* Required prior to COVID-19.</p>

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<p>Category: 2021-2022 K-12 School Requirements and Recommendations</p>	<p>Question: What counts as a face covering or mask?</p>	<p>Response: Here are OHA's definitions of face coverings, masks, and face shields, as well as what does not count as a face covering or mask.</p>
<p>Category: Sports</p>	<p>Question: Are face masks required for indoor sports?</p>	<p>Response: No. This is a local decision. Non-educational before and after school programs are voluntary, unlike school and some required educational programming before and after school. Face masks are strongly recommended and, especially if they are not locally required, each school should strongly consider participation in the diagnostic screening program for voluntary extracurricular activities. OAR 333-019-1015 states that an individual is not required to wear a mask under section (3) of this rule if the individual is practicing or playing a competitive extracurricular sport at any level.</p> <p>Information from OSAA is available in this message.</p>
<p>Category: Sports</p>	<p>Question: Are face masks required for sports officials?</p>	<p>Response: Yes and no. OAR 333-019-1015 and OAR 333-019-1025 do not require a person to wear a face covering indoors or outdoors when officiating a competitive sport that requires a high level of physical exertion by the official. All officials who are not actively officiating, or who are officiating without a high level of physical exertion must wear a face covering.</p>
<p>Category: Physical Education (PE)</p>	<p>Question: Do you have to wear face covering during an indoor PE?</p>	<p>Response: When participating in PE indoors, a face mask is required unless a medical exception has been given to wear a face shield instead or the class activity makes it infeasible to wear a mask (e.g., swimming).</p> <p>PE itself is a class, not a competitive sport, which is why it does not fall under the competitive sports face mask exception.</p>

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<p>Category: Disability, Accommodations, and Special Education</p>	<p>Question: What about students who have challenges related to a disability?</p>	<p>Response: ODE will provide technical assistance for accommodations similar to the 2020-2021 academic year. For more information related to special education and IEP teams, please visit page 9 of the 2021-2022 Resiliency Framework.</p>
<p>Category: Disability and Accommodations</p>	<p>Question: The school face covering rule says that a face shield may be worn instead of a mask or face covering if an individual cannot wear a mask or face covering for medical reasons. What proof is required from a staff member or student to allow for this exception?</p>	<p>Response: The rule does not specify requirements for proof of a medical reason for allowing an individual to wear a face shield instead of a face covering; however, wearing of a face shield at school instead of a face covering may be done only if an individual cannot wear a face covering for a medical reason. In addition, schools and school districts are required to engage in the appropriate process to evaluate the need for an accommodation upon request by a student or their parent or guardian. For example, schools must engage in an interactive ADA process, an ADA/504 process, or an IDEA process, as appropriate.</p>
<p>Category: Disability and</p>	<p>Question: Under the rule, are</p>	<p>Response: If a student has a medical reason for not wearing a face covering, under the rule, a school can allow the child to wear a face shield after following the appropriate</p>

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Accommodations	general education students (i.e., those who are not on an IEP or 504) eligible for an exception to the face covering requirement?	legal process (e.g., interactive ADA process, an ADA/504 process, or an IDEA process, as appropriate).
Category: Disability and Accommodations	Question: If my school receives a doctor’s note requesting that a staff member or student be excepted from the face covering requirement, does the staff member or student have to continue wearing a face covering while the school reviews the request?	Response: Yes. In addition, a school is not required to approve a request for an exception and should work with their legal counsel to review each situation.

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<p>Category: Disability and Accommodations</p>	<p>Question: My school has received several notes from doctors in Oregon and doctors from other states requesting medical exceptions for staff and students from wearing face coverings at school. What should we do if we think the basis for the medical exception is invalid or that the letters are fake?</p>	<p>Response: Schools and school districts should work with their legal counsel to determine the most appropriate response for each situation.</p>
<p>Category: Disability and Accommodations</p>	<p>Question: Where can I get more information about accommodations</p>	<p>Response: ODE has developed guidance related to Considering Reasonable Accommodation of Face Covering Requirements. If schools have questions about implementation of this guidance, staff should reach out to the applicable County Contact.</p>

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	for students who receive support through a Section 504 Plan and/or IEP?	
Category: Disability and Accommodations	Question: If, based on a medical reason, a school allows a student to wear a face shield instead of a face covering, are there additional requirements that a school must implement to protect that student and other students from the spread of COVID-19?	Response: There are no additional requirements under the rule, but schools should continue to implement and reinforce practices that reduce the spread of COVID-19. These practices include moving activities and classes outdoors, ensuring good ventilation in indoor spaces, providing more physical distance between individuals, and good hand hygiene.
Category: Quarantine	Question: What is considered a COVID exposure?	Response: <i>Within the K-12 school setting, individuals who experience an unmasked indoor close contact with someone with COVID-19 that occurs within 6 feet for 15 or more minutes. These types of exposures occur most often during mealtimes when masks</i>

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		<i>cannot be worn, during learning or curricular activities where masks may not be worn or during school-related extracurricular activities where masks are not worn.</i>
Category: Quarantine	Question: What should schools do if there is a COVID exposure?	Response: If a student or staff member is diagnosed with COVID-19, then a school representative <i>should</i> refer to the Planning for COVID-19 Schools Scenario Toolkit for more information.
Category: Quarantine	Question: Do vaccinated people need to quarantine?	Response: <i>Adults who are up to date with their COVID-19 vaccination or youth 5-17 who are fully vaccinated</i> who have come into close contact with someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 should <i>watch for symptoms of COVID-19</i> , be tested 5 days after exposure, and should wear a mask in public indoor settings for 10 days .
Category: COVID-19 Testing	Question: In what circumstances do students and staff undergo COVID-19 testing?	Response: When students or staff develop symptoms at school or are exposed to COVID-19 at school. Schools have the option to offer onsite testing in partnership with the Oregon Health Authority. Per the CDC (August 4, 2021) unvaccinated students or staff should be tested shortly after exposure is recognized. Fully vaccinated students or staff should be tested 3-5 days after exposure regardless of symptoms developing or not. For more information relating to COVID-19 testing and schools, please visit OHA's COVID-19 testing in schools website .
Category: Music	Question: Can students still play instruments that are operated by	Response: Yes. This is allowed under the OHA rule.

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	the mouth without a mask?	
Category: Theater	Question: How does the mask rule apply to theater?	Response: While indoors during class time, masks are required in theater classes, as is any class. During performances, performers are excepted from the mask rule as outlined in OAR 333-019-1015 . All spectators and those supporting the performance behind the scenes must wear a face covering.
Category: School pick-up and drop-off	Question: How does the mask rule apply to picking up and dropping off students at school?	Response: An individual is not required to wear a mask or face covering during arrival and dismissal if the individual is outdoors and able to maintain at least six feet of distance from other individuals not in their household.