

Schools and COVID-19 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 K-12 School Requirements and Recommendations](#), [Sports](#), [Disability, Accommodations, Special Education](#), [Quarantine](#), [COVID-19 Testing](#), [Music](#), [Theater](#), and [Pick-up/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 the Delta variant that now makes up 80% of cases in Oregon. 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 is substantially more impactful than the COVID-19 we have seen in the past. There are more instances of “breakthrough cases” amongst vaccinated people due to the Delta variant compared to previous variants; however, breakthrough case rates remain low. 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 variant is more severe for children 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 Delta variant spreads through our schools it will also impact staff and student family members, some of whom may be at greater risk. <i>You can learn more from the CDC morbidity and mortality weekly report.</i></p>

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<p>Category: 2021-2022 K-12 School Requirements</p>	<p>Question: Who is enforcing the K-12 mask mandate? What happens if there is failure of enforcement?</p>	<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 (temporary amendment to rule to be adopted by OROSHA). 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.
<p>Category: 2021-2022 K-12 School Requirements</p>	<p><i>Question: What counts as a face-covering or mask?</i></p>	<p><i>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. 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.”</i></p>
<p>Category: 2021-2022 K-12 School</p>	<p>Question: Why the shift from local control?</p>	<p>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</p>

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Requirements		<p>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.</p>
Category: 2021-2022 K-12 School Requirements	Question: What’s in the OAR rule exactly and why is OHA requiring this?	<p>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 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>
Category: 2021-2022 K-12 School Requirements	Question: When is an individual not required to wear a mask?	<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. <i>On August 29, 2021, this rule was updated to require everyone age 5 or older to wear a face covering in outdoor gathering settings.</i> Face coverings are not required when an individual is:</p>

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • <i>Is in a private individual workspace.</i> • <i>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.</i> • <i>Is practicing or playing a competitive sport at any level.</i> • <i>Is officiating a competitive sport that requires a high level of physical exertion by the official.</i> • <i>Is performing, including but not limited to playing music, delivering a speech to an audience, and theater.</i> <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"> • <i>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.</i> • <i>Is sleeping.</i> • <i>Is actively eating or drinking.</i> • <i>Is engaged in an activity that makes wearing a mask, face covering or face shield not feasible, such as when actively swimming.</i> • <i>Is in a private individual workspace.</i> • <i>Must remove the mask or face covering briefly because the individual’s identity needs to be confirmed by visual comparison.</i> • <i>Is practicing or playing a competitive sport at any level.</i> • <i>Is officiating a competitive sport that requires a high level of physical exertion by the official.</i>
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Is performing, including but not limited to playing music, delivering a speech to an audience, and theater. This exception does not apply to teaching.</i>
Category: 2021-2022 K-12 School Requirements	Question: When did the OHA K-12 mask mandate come into effect?	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.
Category: 2021-2022 K-12 School Requirements	<i>Question: Are teachers allowed to take off their masks during instruction? Is this considered to be part of the speech mask exception?</i>	<i>Response: No. Teachers must wear a face covering indoors per the rule language, and in all situations where 6 ft. physical distance cannot be consistently or generally maintained. 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.</i>
Category: 2021-2022 K-12 School Requirements	Question: What are the consequences to a student or family member not wearing a mask inside a school?	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 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

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		<p>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>Response: 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 Following CDC Guidelines
<p>Category: 2021-2022 K-12 School Requirements</p>	<p>Question: Is the OHA Mask Mandate rule for the full 2021-2022 academic year?</p>	<p>Response: No. The goal is to go back to local decision-making. OHA will review the situation monthly. 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.</p>

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<p>Category: 2021-2022 K-12 School Recommendations</p>	<p>Question: Are masks required at the district office and other non-school sites? What about School Board Meetings?</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>Category: 2021-2022 K-12 School Requirements and Recommendations</p>	<p>Question: What happens if a student or family member chooses not to wear a mask?</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>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>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 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>

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<p>Category: 2021-2022 K-12 School Requirements and Recommendations</p>	<p><i>Question: Are teachers able to wear face shields while teaching phonics; teaching enunciation of words and sounds to students?</i></p>	<p><i>Response: Face shields are only permitted for use when a medical exception to mask-wearing is allowed.</i></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: “Given new evidence on the B.1.617.2 (Delta) variant, CDC has updated the guidance for fully vaccinated people. CDC recommends universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors to K-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status. Children should return to full-time in-person learning in the fall with layered prevention strategies in place.”</p> <p>This has guided Ready Schools, Safe Learners when creating the 2021-2022 Resiliency Framework. With Oregon’s current uptick in Delta variant COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations, we implemented statewide universal masking in indoor k-12 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 be reviewed at least monthly for a shift back to local decision-making. Oregon’s K-12 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</p>

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		<p>continuity of in-person instruction. * <i>Required prior to COVID-19.</i></p>
<p>Category: Sports</p>	<p>Question: Are face masks required for indoor sports?</p>	<p>Response: No. This is a local decision. <u>Non-educational</u> 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><i>Question: Are face masks required for sports officials?</i></p>	<p><i>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.</i></p>
<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 8 of the 2021-2022 Resiliency Framework.</p>
<p>Category: Quarantine</p>	<p>Question: What is</p>	<p>Response: For adults: An exposure is defined as a susceptible individual who has close contact (less than 6 feet) for longer than 15 cumulative minutes in a day with a person</p>

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	considered a COVID exposure?	<p>who has COVID-19.</p> <p>Within the K-12 school setting, CDC and OHA have adopted a modification to this definition. When students are at least three feet apart and everyone is wearing a face covering, students who are in close contact with someone with COVID-19 don't need to quarantine unless they have symptoms. This modification does not apply to adults in the school setting. <i>Schools/districts should work closely with the LPHA who is responsible for determining exposures.</i></p>
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 needs to coordinate with an LPHA to then review the situation. The LPHA is the person who will determine quarantine length.
Category: Quarantine	Question: Do vaccinated people need to quarantine?	<i>Response: Fully vaccinated people who have come into close contact with someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 should be tested 3-5 days after exposure, and should wear a mask in public indoor settings for 14 days or until they receive a negative test result.</i> You are considered fully vaccinated two weeks after a second-vaccine dose from Pfizer or Moderna, or two weeks after your single-shot Johnson & Johnson vaccine.
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.

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Category: Music	Question: Can students still play instruments that are operated by the mouth without a mask?	Response: Yes. This is allowed under the OHA rule.
<i>Category: Theater</i>	<i>Question: How does the mask rule apply to theater?</i>	<i>Response: Masks are required during indoor theater class, just as they are in any indoor 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.</i>
<i>Category: School pick-up and drop-off</i>	<i>Question: How does the mask rule apply to picking up and dropping off students at school?</i>	<i>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.</i>