



## Mask Use for the 2021-2022 School Year During COVID-19 Pandemic

TO: All CTECS Staff, Students, Parents and Guardians  
FROM: Mr. Jeffrey Wihbey, Superintendent of Schools  
DATE: August 2021

For the 2021-22 school year, CTECS is continuing to implement a face mask requirement in order to safeguard the health and safety of students and staff and to allow all students the opportunity to return to in-person learning. Universal face mask use in CTECS' schools is mandated by Governor Lamont's Executive Order No. 13A as well as guidelines established by the Connecticut Department of Public Health and the Connecticut State Department of Education.

### **Required Use of Face Mask**

All students, staff, and visitors, regardless of vaccination status, shall wear face masks that completely cover the nose and mouth while in school buildings, on school grounds or at a school sponsored activity.

For students, wearing a face mask is part of the school uniform and must satisfy the dress code requirements. Gaiters, bandanas and masks with exhalation valves or vents are not acceptable forms of face masks.

CTECS' schools shall maintain a supply of disposable face masks in the event that a staff member, student or visitor does not have one for use. Students or staff who repeatedly are unprepared will be subject to progressive discipline.

Parents/guardians may not excuse their child from the face mask requirement.

### **Face Mask Breaks**

Face mask breaks during the school day shall be determined by the school Principal.

### **Limited Exceptions to the Use of Face Masks**

Face masks are not required in the following situations:

- While eating or drinking. Face masks are required in all dining areas while entering and leaving or getting food and drinks. Masks may be removed at socially distanced tables in order to eat but must be replaced after eating.
- When outdoors and able to socially distance.

- Fully vaccinated teachers (who have not been identified as close contacts) may remove masks when they are engaged in active instruction at the front of the classroom and socially distanced from students who are seated and masked.
- As an accommodation for students with disabilities or for staff involved with certain special education activities or situations where removing the mask is necessary to teach, including but not limited to the provision of speech therapy or for a child with a hearing loss who needs to read lips.
- When employees are alone in a private office that is not physically shared with others or frequently visited by others. However, they are required to wear a face mask when anyone enters the private office space. A classroom or shop is not considered to be a “private office.” Offices divided by plexiglass barriers are not private office spaces.

Athletic coaches and physical education instructors will provide students with information regarding the limited exceptions to the use of face masks during athletic activities.

#### **Exemption from the Use of Face Masks**

An individual shall be exempt from the face mask requirement if wearing a face mask is contrary to the individual’s health or safety because of a medical condition, behavioral condition, or disability. The exemption will only apply if the individual provides written documentation that the person is qualified for the exemption from a licensed or certified medical provider, psychologist, marriage and family therapist, professional counselor, social worker, behavior analyst or state agency that provides or supports services for people with disabilities. Such documentation shall not require the name or description of the condition that qualifies the individual for exemption.

Employees seeking a medical exemption to the face mask requirement should contact Human Resources to discuss the availability of such an accommodation. Any information provided will be evaluated in accordance with then-current state policy.

#### **Use of Face Shields**

CTECS recognizes that the CDC has stated that it is not clear if face shields provide any benefit as source control to protect others from the spray of respiratory particles. Face shields may also be useful in situations where it is important for students to see how a teacher pronounces words (e.g. English Learners, foreign language) and social distancing is maintained.

Face shields may be an option for those students with medical, behavioral or other challenges who are unable to wear face masks, however, face shields alone are not a sufficient alternate to the wearing of face mask for source control. Face shields should be used only when other methods are not available or appropriate and with strict adherence to social distancing.

In shop, students who utilize face shields are still required to use safety glasses and other required safety gear.

### **Transportation**

Student passengers and drivers are required to wear a face mask that completely covers the nose and mouth during transit. The student's face mask must be in place prior to boarding the bus, van or other student transportation vehicles and must be kept in place until they are completely off the vehicle.

### **Definitions**

Face mask – a cloth, paper, or disposable face covering that covers the nose and mouth. The face mask should fit snugly around the nose and cheeks to prevent gaps. The fabric should be thick enough to block sunlight. A mask of dense woven material is preferred. Based on these specifications, this policy requires: No neck gaiters; No bandanas; No exhalation valves or vents.

Face shield – a clear, plastic shield that covers the forehead, extends below the chin and wraps around the sides of the face, protecting the eyes, nose and mouth.

### **Violations of the Face Mask Requirement**

Violations of the face mask requirement will be considered a health and safety violation. Violators may also be subject to civil penalties (fine).

If a student refuses to wear a face mask and such refusal does not fall within any of the exemptions allowed by this policy, the student will be removed from class. In addition, school personnel will contact the student's parent/guardian to address the behavior and discuss available options. Students who violate this policy may also be subject to the full range of disciplinary sanctions.

Faculty and staff who violate this policy will be subject to disciplinary action.

If a visitor refuses to wear a face mask, entry to the school or CTECS facility may be denied.

### **References**

Governor's Executive Order No. 13A, "Protection of Public Health and Safety During COVID-19 Pandemic- Revised Order for Masks and Face Coverings," August 5, 2021.

"Adapt, Advance, Achieve: Connecticut's Plan to Learn and Grow Together – Fall 2021: Updated Guidance for the Use of Mitigation Strategies in Connecticut's PreK-12 Schools," issued by CSDE and DPH August 19, 2021.

Department of Public Health rule entitled "Conditions and Environments Requiring Universal Masking for the Prevention of COVID-19 on and after May 19, 2021."