

## **Policy for Face Masks and Face Coverings-COVID 19**

### **PURPOSE**

Chariho Regional School District abides by the guidelines set forth from the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) and RI Department of Health (RIDOH) for face coverings related to COVID 19 Health & Safety Guidance for schools. As guidance is updated the District reserves the right to implement and update mask guidance as necessary.

The Chariho Regional School District is committed to following the CDC recommendations for mask-wearing due to the age of our staff, the medical conditions of a significant number of staff and students in our classrooms, and the civic responsibility of our community to protect everyone's health and safety. The CDC recommendations state, "To reduce the spread of COVID 19, CDC strongly recommends that people regardless of vaccination status wear cloth face coverings indoors and in public settings when around people outside of their household, especially when other [social distancing](#) measures are difficult to maintain." Face Masks/Face coverings will be strongly recommended to be worn by all staff and students indoors regardless of vaccination status per CDC guidance based on the events, venue, number of attendees, and other relevant factors.

### **DEFINITIONS**

**Cloth face covering:** Textile (cloth) covers are intended to keep the person wearing one from spreading respiratory secretions when talking, sneezing, or coughing. CDC has guidance available on [the design, use, and maintenance of cloth face coverings](#).

**Facemask:** Facemasks are PPE and are often referred to as surgical masks or procedure masks. Use facemasks according to product labeling and local, state, and federal requirements. FDA-cleared surgical masks are designed to protect against splashes and sprays and are prioritized for use when such exposures are anticipated, including surgical procedures. Facemasks that are not regulated by FDA, such as some procedure masks, which are typically used for isolation purposes, may not provide protection against splashes and sprays.

### **Grades PK-12**

It is strongly recommended that all individuals regardless of their vaccination status wear a face covering when entering a district facility or attending school.

Face coverings shall, at a minimum include:

- covering the nose and mouth and be secured under the chin, and
- fit snugly against the side of your face with no gaps, and
- may not have exhalation valves or vents.

During sports and related activities, all athletes must follow the athletic guidance from the Superintendent (or designee), which is informed by the Rhode Island Interscholastic League and CDC based on the requirement of their sport.

- Masks/face coverings are strongly recommended for individuals regardless of vaccination status which may be updated based on guidance from RIDOH and the CDC.
- Cloth face coverings should not be placed on children younger than age two; anyone who has trouble breathing; or anyone who is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.
- Masks/face coverings should be provided by the student/family, but extra disposable face masks will be made available by the school for students and/or staff who need them. Reusable masks/face coverings provided by families should be washed by families daily.
- Masks/face coverings are required to be worn by everyone on the bus during school bus transportation by federal order unless guidance is updated and provided by the District. CDC guidelines state that a mask may not be worn for the following reasons: 1) no one under the age of two should wear a mask, 2) if it would medically compromise, and 3) developmentally-delayed population if they are unable to remove the mask themselves. A physician's note cannot excuse mask-wearing, however, it can indicate the condition/disability and the impact it would have on the individual.
- Mask breaks should occur throughout the day for individuals who have chosen to wear a mask. Breaks should occur when students can be appropriately socially distanced based on minimum requirements per RIDOH.

All face coverings/masks must follow the CDC guidance which currently states:

- The mask must have two or more layers.
- The mask must cover your nose and mouth and be secured under the chin.
- The mask must fit snugly against the side of your face with no gaps.
- The mask may not have exhalation valves or vents.
- If you wear a face shield, you must still wear a mask.
- Gaiters and bandanas are not acceptable face coverings and will not be permitted.

### **EXIGENT CIRCUMSTANCES**

The School Committee recognizes that the continued prevalence of COVID-19 and all its variants create a dynamic emergent situation resulting in the potential change in public health and safety recommendations and orders from the CDC, the Rhode Island Department of Health, and the Governor of the State of Rhode Island or in the district's approach to health and safety measures.

In the event any mandatory order is issued in this regard, or in the event of an unanticipated change in circumstances in which the Superintendent determines it is necessary to immediately alter the District's response and notwithstanding this policy, the Superintendent is directed to forthwith amend the District's response to COVID -19 pandemic and to conform with all such orders.

Adopted and Effective 9-22-20; Revised and Effective 5-25-21; Revised and Effective 8-10-21