

HEALTHY *child*
care COLORADO



MASKING IN CHILD CARE GUIDE

Healthy Child Care Colorado

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INTRODUCTION

Healthy Child Care Colorado's mission is to build safe, supportive, and healthy early childhood settings and systems where children and professionals learn and grow.

This Guide was originally created through collaborative discussions with early childhood programs and Child Care Aware of New Hampshire and some of the resources here are based on compilation of their experiences, policies, and practices on masking in their programs. The Guide has been adapted by Healthy Child Care Colorado and other stakeholders to ensure the content, policies, and resources are relevant to Colorado. This includes helpful tips and links to support children, staff, and families in utilizing masks.

Reminder: Masks and other face coverings are not allowed to be used for children less than 3 years of age in licensed child care settings.

Benefits of Masking in Child Care

- Fewer illnesses program-wide
- Less children touching their faces and picking their noses
- Reduce the spread of the coronavirus



INTRODUCTION

“Masks are a critical step to help prevent people from getting and spreading COVID-19. A cloth mask offers some protection to you as well as protecting those around you. Wear a mask and take every day preventive actions in public settings and mass transportation, at events and gatherings, and anywhere you will be around other people.” – [How to Wear Masks](#)

From the CDC How to Wear a Mask:

- Wash your hands or use hand sanitizer before putting on your mask.
- Put the mask over your nose and mouth and secure it under your chin.
- Fit the mask snugly against the sides of your face, slipping the loops over your ears or tying the strings behind your head.
- If you have to continually adjust your mask, it doesn't fit properly, and you might need to find a different mask type or brand.
- Make sure you can breathe easily.

CDC Resources

The Center for Disease Control offers many great resources around how to use and wash masks. Check out some of these resources.

Your Guide to Masks

- How to select a Mask
- Special Considerations
- How to Wear Masks
- How to Clean Masks

How to Wear Masks

- Wear Your Mask Correctly
- Take off Mask Carefully at Home
- Cold Weather

How to Store and Wash Masks

- Store Masks
- Wash Masks
- Dry Masks

Considerations for Wearing Masks

- What You Need to Know
- Who Should & Should Not Wear Masks
- Types of Masks
- Other Types of Face Protection
- Mask Adaptations and Alternatives

HOW TO SUPPORT CHILDREN

“Some masks work better than others to help stop the spread of COVID-19” - [Considerations for Wearing Masks](#)

“The more that we wear face coverings around others the more effective they are. That’s because fewer droplets are moving freely within an area. When combined with the additional protective measures of proper hand washing and physical distancing, face coverings are even more effective at limiting the spread of the coronavirus.” – Children’s Hospital Colorado

Read full article: [Masks for Kids: What You Need to Know About Face Coverings](#)

There are many ways to support children with masking: through program curriculum, including books, songs, pictures of children, families and staff with masks on and puppets. Other programs have shared they’ve created “Mask Rules” with children, which spoke to when and where children wear a mask and how the mask will be worn. Involving children in the creation of these rules, helps the children have ownership. This may also encourage group problem solving skills and make it easier for staff to support children in following best practice.

Tips for Supporting Children with Wearing Masks:

- Have children be part of the problem-solving process by co-creating mask rules in accordance with the Colorado Dept of Public Health and Environment’s [Guidance for Child Care Facilities](#)
- Never use harsh words, threats, shame, or punishment if a child doesn’t wear a mask. Encourage children to wear masks and use positive guidance strategies. There is a course about positive guidance in the [Professional Development Information System](#) that may be helpful.
- Create visuals or a social story to support individual children who may need one-on-one support around wearing a mask. [Wearing Masks](#) | [Usando Mascaros](#)
- Allow opportunities for children to play with small masks on dolls.
- Every day the child comes to school with two small paper bags one labeled “Dirty” and one labeled “Clean”. The child places worn masks in the “dirty” bag and grabs a clean as needed.

HOW TO SUPPORT CHILDREN

Tips for Supporting Infants & Toddlers:

While infants and toddlers do not wear masks in child care, it is important to recognize that their caregivers do wear them. This requires additional attention and strategies to ensure these young children are socially and emotionally supported.

- “It's important to remember that infants need physical touch—holding, comforting, picking up, diapering, feeding—to feel supported and safe.” - [Tips for Infant/Toddler Programs](#) | Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center
- Notice, acknowledge, and respond to the meaning the behavior is communicating. Resisting a mask might be an expression of fear, discomfort, or confusion. [All the Feels: Helping Young Children Cope with the Return to Child Care](#) | Zero To Three
- Remember that responsive caregiving, or noticing and responding in contingent ways, to the needs infants and toddlers are expressing is non-negotiable.
- [Re-Connecting and Building Relationships with Infants](#) | [Cómo reconectarse y establecer relaciones con los bebés](#)

Supporting Children with Disabilities:

The use of masks for children of any age with developmental disorders, disabilities (social, emotional, cognitive, developmental, physical) or other specific health conditions should not be mandatory and need to be assessed on a case-by-case basis by the child's parent, guardian, educator and/or medical provider. In any case, children with severe cognitive or respiratory impairments with difficulties tolerating a mask should not be required to wear masks. – [World Health Organization](#)

[Helping Children Understand Emotions When Wearing Masks](#) |
National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations

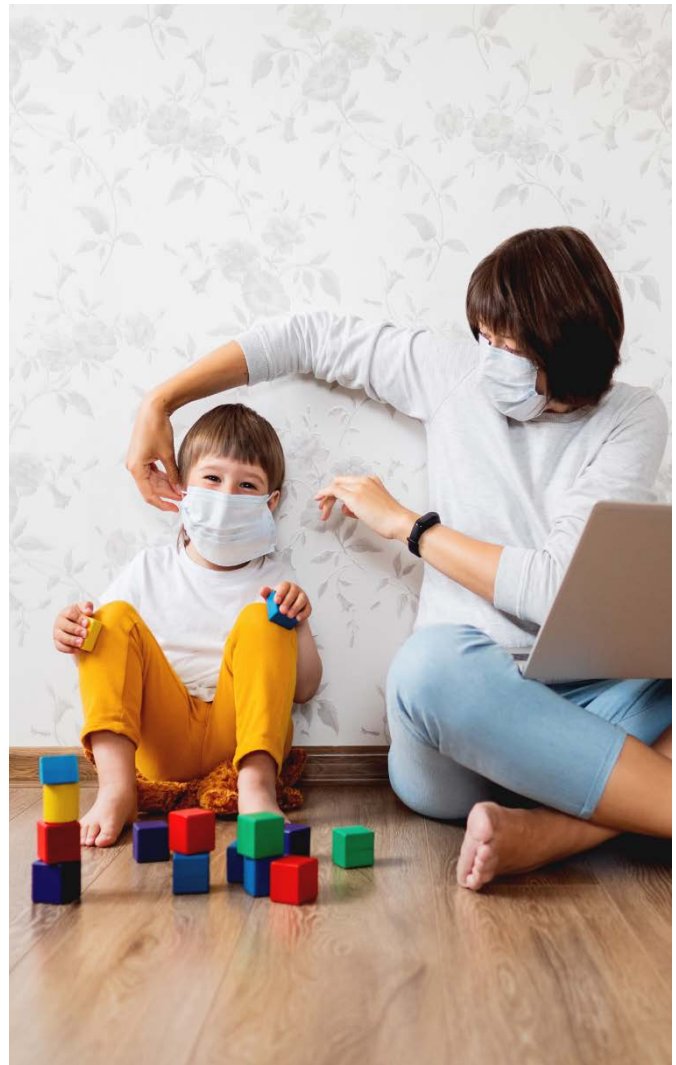
HOW TO SUPPORT CHILDREN

Videos

- **Fluffster Wears a Mask** – Sesame Street in Communities
- **Wearing a Mask Helps Stop the Spread of Germs** – Meet the Helpers
- **How to Wash Your Hands** – Sesame Street
- **Wash Your Hands** – CDC
- **Wearing A Mask Social Story** – English, Spanish, Chinese, Russian, Arabic, and Burmese

Books

- Heroes Wear Masks: Elmo's Super Adventure By Sesame Street
- Smiling from Ear to Ear: Wearing Masks While Having Fun By Kaitlyn Chu
- My Mask Makes Me A Superhero! By Jessa Brock & Keaton Brock
- Ella and Her Mask! By Nadine Salama
- Riley's Masked Adventure: A Kids Superhero Story About Germs, COVID, And Wearing a Mask By Reggie Young
- My New Mask: Mi Nueva Mascara by Christa Lawrence



HOW TO SUPPORT CHILDREN

Songs

*(Sing to the tune of **Frère Jacques**)*

Wear your mask
Wear your mask
Hide your nose
Hide your nose
This will keep you safe
This will keep me safe
The germs will slow
The germs will go

*(Sing to the tune of **Twinkle Twinkle Little Star**)*

Lots of heroes wear a mask
This is all we really ask
Doctors, nurses, ninjas too
Only want to protect you!
When you wear your mask you see
You show your love for you and me

*(Sing to the tune of **The More We Get Together**)*

Whenever we're together
Together, Together
Whenever we're together
Please wear your mask
'Cause your germs are your germs
And my germs are my germs
Whenever we're together
Please wear your mask

HOW TO SUPPORT STAFF

"When children engage in behavior that pushes your buttons, it is important to be intentional in how you respond." [Self-Care for Teachers](#)

There are a variety of ways to support staff during this time. Here are some suggestions from child care providers:

- Offer mask breaks outdoors: Provide intentional staff time to have a break from masking and consider letting staff take breaks outside. Be sure to physically distance.
- Offer self-care opportunities: Promote short walks outside, provide activity tip sheets on meditation, play soothing music in the break room, etc.
- Provide mask extenders or headbands: These protect staffs' ears from long days of mask wearing. Some providers shared they used homemade ones or bought a pack from Amazon.
- Provide different styles of masks: Provide staff with masks that vary in material, such as homemade cloth or disposable ones, so they can find the fit they like best. [Types of Effective Masks](#)

Tips for Supporting Staff:

- Get staff feedback: Ask staff what is working? What is difficult? Include them in the decision-making process.
- Engage staff in self-care: Ask staff what they do for self-care? Provide them with resources to support them in managing their health, stress and well-being.
- Provide gestures of appreciation: Write notes or provide a small token of appreciation.
- For staff who wear glasses, find a mask that fits closely over your nose or has a nose wire to help reduce fogging. Consider using an anti-fogging spray that is made for eyeglasses.
- Share supportive resources such as the [Educator Well-Being Support Line](#)

HOW TO SUPPORT FAMILIES

“While it may be a challenge for very young children not to fidget with their face covering, as mask-wearing becomes routine and reinforced by adults and peers, they will learn to follow directions. Just like children understand that they must wear bicycle helmets and buckle into their car seats, they will learn to wear masks when needed.” – **Masks or Cloth Face Coverings for Children During COVID-19**

“Know that it's normal for young kids to react with caution to things they don't expect, understand, or feel familiar with. Let them take their time to warm up to what's new.” – **Helping Kids Get Used to Masks**

Tips for Supporting Families

- Create clear policies and procedures based on Healthy Child Care Colorado's **COVID-19 Health & Safety Toolkit for Child Care Programs**, so families know what is expected.
- Provide families with a list of what to bring every day.
- Share resources in regular and varied forms of communication.
- Share with families how their child is doing with masking and what masks work best for them.
- Have families use an at home **screening form** to decide if a child should attend.
- **Sample health screening tool**. Use a health screening form consistently to facilitate a more efficient drop off process. Google has been used by these programs and is recommended as an option. Here is a
- Model mask wearing behavior for the families and children.
- Have a stash of extra masks available for the child who runs out or the family who is unable to buy their own masks. **Colorado Mask Project**
- Provide families with tokens of appreciation and encouragement.

Transitioning Back to the Program: Connecting with Families

“Another benefit of wearing masks is that they may keep people from touching their mouths and faces, which is another way COVID-19 can be spread. There are many types of masks, but cloths masks are the best choice for the general public and families should choose a mask that is most comfortable while still providing a secure fit.” – **Masking Mythbusters**

POLICIES

Staff

Consider creating a Mask Wearing Policy to clarify expectations, policies, and procedures that keep your staff as well as the children and families safe and healthy. This [Sample Mask Wearing Policy](#) may be used and adapted to meet the needs of your specific program.

Families

Consider creating a COVID-19 Pandemic Information Guide for Families to help clarify expectations, policies, and procedures that in place to keep your staff as well as the children and families safe and healthy. This [Sample COVID-19 Pandemic Information Guide for Families](#) may be used and adapted to meet the needs of your specific program.

Some families may be transitioning back into your program or into a child care setting for the first time since the pandemic started. Review this information to support the transition.

[Transitioning Back to the Program: Connecting with Families](#)



KEY RESOURCES

Colorado Resources

- [Colorado Dept of Public Health and Environment | COVID-19 Resources](#)
- [Colorado Dept of Public Health and Environment | Mask Guidance](#)
- [Colorado Dept of Public Health and Environment | Guidance for Child Care Facilities](#)
- [Colorado Dept of Human Services | Resource Guide for Child Care Programs](#)
- [Una Guía De Recursos Par Los Proveedores De Cuidado Infantil Durante El Covid-19](#)
- [Healthy Child Care Colorado | COVID-19 Health & Safety Toolkit for Child Care Programs](#)
- [Children’s Hospital Colorado | Masks for Kids: What You Need to Know About Face Coverings](#)
- [Children’s Hospital Colorado | COVID-19 Resources from Children’s Hospital Colorado](#)
- [Colorado Mask Project](#)

National Resources

- [CDC | How to Wear Masks](#)
- [CDC | How to Wash and Store Masks](#)
- [CDC | Considerations When Wearing a Mask](#)
- [CDC | Coronavirus Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [Kids Health | Coronavirus Covid-19: Helping Children Get Used to Masks](#)
- [American Academy of Pediatrics | Mask Mythbusters: Five Common Misconceptions About Kids and Cloth Face Coverings](#)
- [National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations | Wearing Masks Social Story](#)
- [National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations | Usando Mascaras](#)
- [National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations | I Can Be Healthy and Safe By Washing My Hands! Social Story](#)
- [National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations | ¡Puedo estar seguro y saludable lavándome las manos!](#)
- [Emergencies and National Disasters: Helping Children and Families Cope](#)



SAMPLE MASK WEARING POLICY



DATE HERE
PROGRAM NAME | ADDRESS/WEBSITE

[Program Name's] COVID-19 Mask Wearing Policy

Introduction

This COVID-19 Mask Wearing Policy has been created to provide clear expectations for our program throughout the pandemic and is meant to help guide families and staff with open communication. This Policy may be adjusted based on the masking guidance and emergency needs of the program and community. **[Program Name]** will adjust this Policy as needed due to federal, state, and local guidelines for child care programs. We will follow requirements and recommendations for the health and safety of staff as well as the children and families we serve.

Below is a SAMPLE policy. sample policy is intended to serve as a guide as programs develop a policy that meets the needs of their program and the children and families they serve.

This policy outlines the requirements for mask wearing in **[Program Name]**. Updated guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the American Academy of Pediatrics and the state of Colorado, along with the guidance to assist children with the social emotional aspects of mask wearing, was considered when developing this sample policy. During the time of a pandemic, **[Program Name]** will follow guidance from the Centers for Disease Control, Governor Polis' Office, as well as state and local public health and human services agencies.

All staff are required to wear a mask or face covering at all times while in the program unless doing so would be contrary to their health or safety because of a medical condition, or subject to another exception listed below. If a medical condition exists, documentation will be required from a licensed medical practitioner.

DATE

Children age 3 years and older are required to wear a mask except for the following:

- A child with a documented medical condition, special health care need, or developmental need (such as sensory integration) for whom wearing a mask or face covering would be contrary to their health or safety.
- A child with a documented disability or special education need for whom wearing a mask or face covering would be contrary to their needs. In addition, children and staff while involved with certain special education and related services activities like speech and language therapy or where lip reading is required.
- Children who are newly enrolled or have just turned 3 years old and are working toward mask wearing.
- Other: _____

Breaks from Mask Wearing

- Children should never wear a mask while eating, sleeping or resting. During these times when masks are removed, distance between children will be maximized, maintaining at least 6 feet of distance wherever possible.
- Children will be allowed to remove their mask when outdoors while maintaining social distance of at least 6 feet.

Children Experiencing Difficulties with Mask Wearing

Staff will work with children who have difficulty complying with the mask requirement by issuing soft verbal reminders and other gentle means of supporting compliance. Children will not be disciplined or excluded from the program or isolated from their peers due to non-compliance with mask wearing. Staff will work with parents of children having difficulty wearing a face mask to develop a plan to support the child so they will adapt to wearing a face mask. However, if a parent refuses to have their child wear a face mask, continued enrollment may not be permitted.

DATE

Wearing Removing Masks

- Hands will be washed or sanitized before putting on a mask
- All masks or face coverings shall cover the mouth and nose and wrap securely around the face. Face shields will not be permitted.
- Masks will not be put around the neck or up on the forehead.
- Efforts will be taken to not touch the mask when wearing and only handled by the ear loops or ties.
- Efforts will be taken not to touch eyes, nose, and mouth when removing.
- Hands will be washed immediately after removing a mask.
- When possible, staff will wash or sanitize their hands before and after helping a child put on or adjust a mask.
- Masks will be clearly identified with staff and children's names or initials, to avoid confusion or swapping.
- Masks will be stored in individually labeled containers or paper bags.
- Masks are required to be washed after every day of use and/or before being used again, or if visibly soiled.
- Parents will be asked to supply additional masks for their child in case a back-up mask is needed during the day and to facilitate every day washing of masks.

A copy of this policy will be maintained on-site at the program.

Acknowledgement

I have received and reviewed [Program Name's] COVID-19 Mask Wearing Policy.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

This COVID-19 Mask Wearing Policy has been created to provide clear expectations throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. This Policy may be adjusted regularly based on mask wearing guidance and emergency needs of the program and community. This was written to help guide families and staff with open communication. **[Program Name]** will adjust this Policy as needed due to federal, state, and local guidelines for child care programs. We will follow all requirements and recommendations for the health and safety of the staff as well as the children and families we serve.

DATE



SAMPLE COVID-19 INFORMATION GUIDE FOR FAMILIES



DATE HERE
PROGRAM NAME | ADDRESS/WEBSITE

[Program Name's] COVID-19 Pandemic Information Guide for Families

During the time of a pandemic, **[Program Name]** will follow guidance from the Centers for Disease Control, Governor Polis' Office, as well as state and local public health and human services agencies.

Introduction

This COVID-19 Pandemic Information Guide for Families has been created to provide clear expectations throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. This Guide may be adjusted based on the pandemic and emergency needs of the program and community. This handbook was written to help guide families and staff with open communication. **[Program Name]** will adjust this Guide as needed due to federal, state, and local guidelines for child care programs. We will follow all requirements and recommendations for the health and safety of the staff as well as the children and families we serve.

Dropping off / Picking up Children

Families must wear a mask during drop off and pick up. The program will implement and utilize curbside pick-up and drop-off. Teachers will greet families and children **[at location]**.

Parents will be asked screening questions daily. Teachers will check each child's temperature to ensure every child is screened according to the required guidance. Parents will not be allowed to enter the building for drop off or pick up.

Please use **[preferred type of communication]** to communicate with staff whenever possible to allow for social distancing.

Hours of operation may change to allow proper staffing. Staffing during these times may be limited.

DATE

Illness Policy and Monitoring

We will follow the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment's guidance "How Sick is too Sick for Child Care" and the Case and Outbreak Guidelines.

- [How Sick is Too Sick in English](#)
- [How Sick is Too Sick in Spanish](#)
- [CO guidance: cases and outbreaks in child care and schools](#)

Keeping Healthy

[Program Name] will take every precaution for your child to stay healthy! Consistent hand washing and sanitizing of the center will be performed many times during the day. Due to increased hand washing, your child's hands may become raw, dry, or cracked. Please apply lotion each night at home to prevent this from happening.

We need your help in keeping children and staff healthy. It is the responsibility of the parents to be open and honest with staff about any illnesses the child, sibling, or parent may be experiencing. If we find that this is not the case, children may be disenrolled. Please do not send your child to school if any member of your household has symptoms and has not received a negative COVID-19 test (ex. Child's sibling wakes up congested and has not been cleared by a doctor or negative COVID-19 test).

We ask that families continue to practice social distancing. Children should avoid going out in public with parents as much as possible. Large group gatherings must be avoided for your child to be able to attend. Any violation in this matter might require the child to be placed on leave from school until the child is quarantined for a 14-day period.

Child Supplies

What to send:

- Extra clothes and masks/face coverings
- A water bottle, which will be sent home to be cleaned and sanitized each day
- Child's nap sheet and blanket

Staff are required to change children's clothes if they spill food, drinks, or bodily fluids on their clothing. Your child may go through more changes of clothes than usual.

DATE

Sheets, blankets, and any other personal belongings will be sent home at the end of the week to be cleaned. Your child's cubby area at school will be sanitized on Fridays and whenever else necessary.

Please do NOT send stuffed animals, pillows, or oversized blankets for rest time. These items are especially difficult to keep clean and germ-free.

Responding to Cases and Outbreaks

Our response to COVID-19 cases and outbreaks is closely coordinated with our local public health department and based on current state recommendations found [here](#).

Program Closure

A decision to close our program is made in partnership with our local public health department and the most recent COVID-19 guidance found [here](#).

Tuition Payments During Pandemic

[Program Name] has the right to modify tuition payments depending on the situation and pandemic. The Director will keep all families updated about payments.

Acknowledgement

I have received and reviewed [Program Name's] COVID-19 Information Guide for Families.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

This COVID-19 Mask Wearing Policy has been created to provide clear expectations throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. This Policy may be adjusted regularly based on mask wearing guidance and emergency needs of the program and community. This was written to help guide families and staff with open communication. **[Program Name]** will adjust this Policy as needed due to federal, state, and local guidelines for child care programs. We will follow all requirements and recommendations for the health and safety of the staff as well as the children and families we serve.

DATE

Encourage Children to Be Mask-Wearing Superheroes!

Mask-wearing helps children learn about staying safe and healthy, and how important it is to respect and take care of each other. Here are some tips to use and share with others:



Show them pictures of themselves wearing masks

Give affirmations and encouragement!

Talk about why we wear masks and listen to their concerns

Let them see you properly wearing your mask

Offer a choice of which mask to wear

Use visuals in the environment to talk about emotions and feelings

Use social stories about masks

We want children to do their best to wear masks, but sometimes due to severe sensory or other developmental issues, children aren't able to wear masks. We suggest that programs and families work together on this to ensure that children who can't wear masks can still feel like superheroes in other ways, like handwashing, covering their mouth when they cough or sneeze, and keeping distanced from other people.

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Building Healthy Futures

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Healthy Child Care Colorado would like to thank everyone who contributed to the adaptation and review of this guidebook. This compilation of key resources will support safe, supportive, and healthy early childhood settings and will be used by child care programs across the state.

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Healthy Child Care Colorado is a statewide nonprofit organization dedicated to building safe, supportive, and healthy early childhood settings and systems where children and professionals learn and grow.