

# Mask Guidance for PreK-12 Public Schools



In anticipation of publishing the updated COVID-19 Response Toolkit, NMPED and NMDOH offer the following guidance for distribution to families, students, educators, and school staff.

## REQUIREMENTS

- **All individuals in elementary schools regardless of vaccination status are required to wear a mask while:**
  - in a school building,
  - on school transportation,
  - or at an indoor school-sponsored event.
- Secondary school students, staff, and volunteers who are fully vaccinated and provide documentation of full vaccination are not required to wear masks.
- **Secondary school students, staff, and volunteers who are unvaccinated (and those who do not provide documentation of full vaccination) are required to wear a mask while:**
  - in a school building,
  - on school transportation,
  - or at an indoor school-sponsored event.
- **Masks are not required outdoors for any individual.**
- Unvaccinated spectators are required to wear masks at indoor school events; however, they are not required to provide evidence of vaccination status. Schools must identify the process for ensuring compliance with mask requirements including posting signage in school facilities, announcing mask requirements at events and other necessary means for enforcement.
- Schools must advise individuals who have a condition or are taking medications that weaken their immune system to talk with their healthcare provider about steps that can be taken to manage health risks.

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## Identifying vaccinated individuals on campus

At a minimum, each school will develop a system for quickly verifying whether an individual on campus has provided evidence of vaccination OR the school shall require universal mask wearing regardless of vaccination status while in a school building, at an indoor school-sponsored event, and on school transportation.

## IMPLEMENTATION

### Students:

- Schools will provide masks to those students who need them (including on buses).
- Schools will not suspend or expel a student for not having a mask.
- If an unvaccinated student removes the mask or refuses to wear the mask, then the student will have to be picked up from school.
- Schools will update their student discipline matrixes for school year 2021-2022 to include:
  - Consequences for violating mask-wearing requirements with a focus on supportive and instructional approaches.
  - A process for moving students into mandatory remote instruction, outdoor only instruction, or other suitable instruction option for students with multiple mask violations.
- Schools must provide notice to families about updated discipline policies and collect signatures indicating receipt of the update.

### Adults:

- Unvaccinated adults who refuse to wear a mask in buildings, at indoor school-sponsored events, or on school transportation must be required to leave.
- Schools must develop policies for visitors who violate mask requirements.
- School HR policies must dictate disciplinary actions for unvaccinated staff members who refuse to wear a mask.

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## **COVID-19 SURVEILLANCE TESTING IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

**COVID-19 surveillance testing is required for all schools providing in-person student services, including athletics. Staff and students who provide evidence of COVID-19 vaccination, and those who have tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 90 days, are not included in surveillance testing.**

Districts and charter schools must ensure that 25% of their faculty and staff who have not provided evidence of COVID-19 vaccination and work onsite participate in COVID-19 testing each week that student services are provided at school. No staff member should be required to participate in weekly surveillance testing more than once every four weeks.

Schools are required to provide student surveillance testing programs to all unvaccinated students on a voluntary basis. In alignment with CDC guidance, those who participate in athletics and other extra-curricular activities are strongly encouraged to participate in surveillance testing. Schools have a weekly goal of testing 25% of unvaccinated students.

Staff members selected for testing should provide evidence to the school that their results were received during the assigned week. Districts and charter schools are required to report the number of staff and students tested for COVID-19 each week through the NMDOH Provider Portal for COVID-19.

All COVID-19 testing is available at no cost to students/staff.

