



## FACE COVERINGS IN SCHOOL FACILITIES FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS February 2022

### 1. What is the requirement for face covering in public schools in Maryland?

[COMAR 13A.01.07 Face Coverings in School Facilities](#), approved by the State Board on December 7, 2021, and by the Administrative, Executive and Legislative Review Committee (AELR) on January 5, 2022, applies to county boards of education and public schools in Maryland. It requires any person inside a school facility to wear a face covering, subject to certain exemptions.

### 2. What type of face covering is required?

“Face covering” means a material that covers the nose and mouth to prevent respiratory droplets from being expelled into the air and that:

- (a) Is secured to the head, including with ties or ear loops;
- (b) Fits snugly but comfortably against the side of the face; and
- (c) Is either manufactured or homemade and is a solid piece of material without slits, exhalation valves, or punctures.

### 3. Are there any exemptions to the requirement to wear a face mask?

The following individuals are exempt from the requirements to wear a face covering while inside a school facility:

- (1) Children who are younger than 2 years old;
- (2) Any person with a disability whose disability prevents the person from wearing a face covering;
- (3) Any person with a physical or mental impairment documented by a physician as preventing the person from safely wearing a face covering;
- (4) Any person while communicating with a person who is hearing impaired when the ability to see the mouth is essential for communication;
- (5) Any person for whom wearing a mask would create a risk to workplace health, safety, or job duty as determined by the relevant workplace safety guidelines or federal regulations;
- (6) Any person who is seated and actively consuming food or beverage;
- (7) Any person who is swimming in a swimming pool;
- (8) Any person who is actively engaged in exercise;
- (9) Any person who is actively playing a musical instrument requiring the removal of the face covering;
- (10) Any student who is engaged in authorized sleep time;
- (11) Any person who is required to temporarily remove the face covering to confirm their identity for security or screening purposes;



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(12) Any person who is receiving services requiring access to the face, mouth, or head; and

(13) Any student who is participating in a school approved fine arts dress rehearsal or performance.

#### 4. Are there procedures in place to lift the requirement for face coverings in all public schools?

Yes, there are multiple off-ramps for a school system or individual school.

#### 5. What are the off-ramps for a local board of education/superintendent to lift the requirement for face coverings?

There are **three** methods to lift the requirement for face coverings that are available to a local school system. The **first method** is:

- To lift the requirement, the entire county or Baltimore City must have **at least 80 percent of the population to be fully vaccinated, as reported by the Maryland Department of Health.**

#### 6. What is the definition of fully vaccinated?

For purposes of the verification and regulation, “fully vaccinated” means 14 days after an eligible student and school staff received the last required dose of an FDA-authorized COVID-19 vaccine as monitored and publicly reported by the Maryland Department of Health.

#### 7. Does fully vaccinated include the booster?

No. The definition of fully vaccinated in the regulation is defined in #6 above. The Maryland Department of Health states: **Everyone 5 years and older are recommended to receive a primary series of a COVID-19 vaccine to be considered fully vaccinated.** The MDH defines and recommends “up-to-date” with vaccines to include additional or booster doses. However, fully vaccinated remains receiving the primary series of a COVID-19 vaccine.

#### 8. Where can I access the vaccination rate, as reported by the Maryland Department of Health?

The *Vaccination in Maryland* link which provides vaccination rates, reported by the Maryland Department of Health, is <https://coronavirus.maryland.gov/#Vaccine>. Directly under *Doses Distributed*, Go to *Vaccinations Administered by Date* box; click on arrow in



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bottom right corner and scroll through to *Percent of Total Population Fully Vaccinated (Proportion Vaccinated by County)*; use the *Fully Vaccinated* data for your school system.

- 9. Is there an attestation form that has to be submitted to the State Superintendent to state that the entire county or Baltimore City has at least 80 percent of the population fully vaccinated, as reported by the Maryland Department of Health, and the mask mandate is being lifted?**

No. This method may be implemented by a motion or resolution of a local board of education, or the governing authority of an entity adopted during a public meeting.

- 10. What off-ramp is related to the vaccination rate of the local school?**

**The second method is:**

- At least 80 percent of the students and school staff of a school facility are fully vaccinated.

- 11. How is the 80 percent vaccination of students and staff of a school facility calculated?**

- Calculation of the 80 percent fully vaccinated threshold includes all enrolled students who are eligible for vaccination based on age in the school facility and any school staff regularly providing services in the school facility.
- Students and school staff who are exempt from vaccination because of medical contraindication or religious exemption may not be counted towards the 80 percent threshold.
- The principal or designated school official of the school facility shall verify the vaccination status of the school staff and students by reviewing a copy of the completed vaccination record card for the school staff and students included in the 80 percent threshold and submit a signed Department approved attestation form in writing to the local superintendent.
- The local superintendent shall submit a signed Department approved attestation form in writing to the State Superintendent of Schools verifying that a school facility has achieved the 80 percent fully vaccinated threshold and may lift the school facility face covering requirements.

- 12. Is there a standardized attestation form for completion by the school principal and the local superintendent for submission to the State Superintendent verifying the 80 percent vaccination of students and staff?**



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Yes. The principal or designated school official of each school/facility must verify that the vaccination status of the school staff and eligible enrolled students met the 80% threshold by reviewing vaccination record(s) (e.g., vaccination card, other reliable proof of vaccination). The number of eligible students and school staff in each facility who are exempted from being fully vaccinated must be included in the documentation.

The standardized verification form is attached. For individual schools, the school principal must send a verification form to the local superintendent or CEO for the school. The local superintendent or CEO verifies to the State Superintendent that the school has fully meet the vaccination requirement. A form must be completed and submitted for each individual school or facility.

### **13. If one of the previous two methods is not used (as described in #5 through #11) as an off-ramp, is there an alternative off-ramp?**

Yes. There is a **third method**.

A local superintendent may lift the face covering if:

- (a) The county or Baltimore City where the entity identified is located has sustained 14 consecutive days of **moderate or low transmission rates of COVID-19 cases, as reported in Centers for Disease Control data;**
- (b) The local superintendent has notified school staff, students and their parents or guardians of the date and time that face covering requirements will be lifted; and
- (c) The date and time when face coverings are lifted is not before the first school day following the local superintendent's notification.

### **14. What happens if the moderate or low transmission rate is not sustained? Does the school system have to revert back to requiring masks?**

Yes. The local superintendent shall:

- (a) Reinstate the face covering requirements if the county or Baltimore City transmission rates of COVID-19 cases are substantial or higher for 14 consecutive days, as reported in Centers for Disease Control data;
- (b) Promptly notify school staff, students and their parents or guardians of the date and time that face covering requirements will be reinstated; and
- (c) Reinstate face covering requirements not later than the first school day following the local superintendent's notification.

### **15. Where can I access the transmission rate, as reported by in Centers for Disease Control (CDC) data?**



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The link to the transmission rate, reported in the Centers for Disease Control data is <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view>. Under the *How to Find a COVID-19 Vaccine* box, there is a dropdown menu entitled *State or territory* – select Maryland. To the right of the *State or territory* drop-down menu there is another drop-down menu entitled *County or metro area* - select your county or Baltimore City from the drop-down menu. This will display your metrics including the *Community transmission*.

- 16. Is there an attestation form that has to be submitted to the State Superintendent to state that the county or Baltimore City where the entity identified is located has sustained 14 consecutive days of moderate or low transmission rates of COVID-19 cases, as reported in Centers for Disease Control (CDC) data and that the mask mandate is being lifted?**

No. This method may be implemented by the local Superintendent.

- 17. Does the method using the sustained 14 consecutive days metric from the CDC need to be a decision of the local board of education or governing entity in a public meeting?**

No, this is the decision of the local superintendent upon confirming the CDC data.

- 18. Do the off ramps only apply to schools or can the off-ramps be applied to the local school system central offices or other school system facilities?**

The off-ramp processes apply to all facilities within the local school system. “School facility” means a building or enclosed structure that is owned, leased, or operated by an entity.

- 19. May the local superintendent’s and/or the county board’s decision to lift the face covering requirements be appealed?**

No. The decision of the superintendent and/or the county board decision to lift the face covering requirements based on the procedures outlined above may not be appealed.

**Note: Providing falsified information is subject to sanctions by the State Superintendent pursuant to Ed §2-303(b).**