



## Delaware County Intermediate Unit [DCIU] and Delaware County Technical Schools [DCTS] Health and Safety Plan

### Questions and Answers Additional Guidance

*Issued: 9-1-20. Updated: 9-15-20, September 30, 2020, October 6, 2020, October 26, 2020 (\*\*New or Revised Q and A)*

DCIU Board of Directors approved the Health and Safety Plan on July 1, 2020 and then an Addendum on August 5, 2020. In addition to our Health and Safety Plan, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), Department of Health (DOH), and the Chester County Health Department (CCHD) have continually updated their guidance. Some of their guidance further defines strategies in our plan or places more restrictions. **The *Questions and Answers* document will be used to clarify strategies in the DCIU and DCTS plan or define additional strategies or restrictions.** As of October 6, 2020, the administrative directive, *Face Covering Protocol for Students, Staff, and Visitors 2020-2021 School Year*, will be incorporated into this document and no longer be a separate directive.

### FACE COVERINGS

#### **Why did the Secretary of the PA Department of Health issue the Face Covering Order on July 1, 2020?**

The Secretary issued this Order to continue to protect all in the Commonwealth from the spread of COVID-19, mindful of the need to slow the increase in the number of cases as the Commonwealth reopens and in order to avoid the resurgence that is overwhelming the health care systems and public health systems in other states who have been less successful in reopening than the Commonwealth.

#### **On August 17, 2020, the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) outlined under what circumstances students are permitted to remove their face coverings (e.g. masks)?**

Schools may allow students to remove face masks when students are:



- Eating or drinking when spaced at least 6 feet apart; or
- When wearing a mask creates an unsafe condition in which to operate equipment or execute a task; or
- At least 6 feet apart during “face-covering breaks” to last no longer than 10 minutes.

PDE identifies that students should be wearing their face masks even when 6 feet apart in a classroom. However, when a student is 6 feet apart, he/she can take a “face covering break”. This is a change from previous guidance. DCIU and DCTS programs should incorporate the strategy of “face-covering breaks” within classrooms or other settings when appropriate and if necessary.

## **\*\* What should staff wear – face masks or face shield?**

To clarify guidance in our health and safety plan- there has been further guidance from the Chester County Health Department on what staff should wear. **All staff should wear face masks. Staff who work with populations who are unable to wear a face mask must also wear a face shield.** This provides the maximum protection for staff. **Further, the PA Department of Health and Chester County Health Department promote face coverings being worn in common areas, cubicles, and other spaces even if 6 feet of distance can be achieved. DCIU will implement this protocol.** In a common area where 6 feet of distance can be maintained, and there are physical barriers in place, staff can wear a face shield. **However, if staff are engaging in any activity or conversations or they move from their workspace, staff shall wear their face masks.**

Proper use of Face Mask is as follows:

Approved Face Coverings	Disposable Mask	Cloth Mask
		
Face Covering Application (i.e. putting on your face covering]	Hook loops snugly around ears. <u>Ensure that mask covers nose and mouth at all times and is secured under the chin.</u>	Secure ties to head or hook loops snugly around ears. <u>Ensure that mask covers nose and mouth at all times and is secured under the chin.</u>
Face Covering Removal	Unhook from ears and pull away from face without touching the inside of the mask. Fold so the inner part of the mask faces inward.	Untie or unhook from the ears and pull away from face without touching the inside of the mask. Fold so the inner part of the mask faces inward.
Face Covering Cleaning	Dispose when necessary.	Wash after daily use in washing machine with other laundry <b>or</b> by hand soaking in a solution of 1/3 cup of household bleach per gallon of room temperature water. Rinse clear. Place in the dryer or hang dry.
Face Covering Rules	Face coverings shall be free of political jargon and statements	Face coverings shall be free of political jargon and statements

## **\*\* How do I handle a colleague whose face mask is not fitting properly?**

Please reinforce with your colleague that masks must cover their nose and mouth at all times. This helps to stop particles from becoming air borne. This helps to keep them and other safer.

It is all of our responsibilities to ensure we help each other follow proper mask wearing. If you see a colleague not wearing their mask, it is also your responsibility to do something. Say something and report it to your supervisor. We are in this together! Masks help keep us safer.

## How should the August 17, 2020 PDE guidance for face covering (e.g. masks and face shields) apply to staff?


Reiterate – **Staff should wear face masks.** , *What should staff wear – face masks or face shield?*

For staff working with populations who have difficulty wearing face masks or cannot wear face masks properly, staff shall also wear face shields in addition to masks.

Staff may remove face coverings when they are:

- Eating or drinking when spaced at least 6 feet apart (see question and answer on meals below); or
- At least 6 feet apart during “face-covering breaks” to last no longer than 10 minutes. Any face cover breaks shall not be around students or other staff. There shall be no talking or conversing during a face covering break.

Proper use of Face Mask is as follows:

	<b>Face Shields</b> 
<b>Face Covering Application</b> (i.e. putting on your face covering]	Bending forward, hold face shield with both hands, expand the elastic or band with thumbs and place the band behind head, so that the foam rests on forehead. Ensure the shield covers the front and sides of the face and no areas are left uncovered.
<b>Face Covering Removal</b>	Remove and pull up and away from face without touching the front of the mask. Check for cracks in the mask and discard if cracked or damaged.
<b>Face Covering Cleaning</b>	Carefully wipe the inside, followed by the outside of the face shield with a disinfectant wipe.
<b>Face Covering Rules</b>	Face coverings shall be free of political jargon and statements. Face shields shall be worn with face masks when with students who are unable to wear face masks properly or are unable to wear face masks.

## Is there guidance on face coverings for DCIU staff, contractors, and students?

Yes. It is the same as for DCIU staff. See previous questions and answers.

## Can staff or students wear neck gaiters as a face covering?

No. Neck Gaiters are not part of the approved Face Coverings for DCIU and DCTS.

## MONITORING STUDENT AND STAFF HEALTH

## What was the updated guidance issued by the Chester County Health Department (CCHD) on August 14, 2020 regarding Isolation Rooms?

Designate an isolation room/area to separate anyone who exhibits COVID-19-like symptoms until the individual can go home, or to a healthcare provider; the isolation room/area should not be the existing nurse’s office if at all feasible.

- Isolation rooms should be positioned near an exit that is separate from the main entrance/exit for ease of leaving the school.

- Isolation room doors should always remain shut.
- Any individual supporting the isolation room/area should enter with full COVID-19 PPE to include eye protection, gloves, gowns; upon exiting the room, the PPE should be taken off.

## **SOCIAL DISTANCING AND OTHER SAFETY PROTOCOLS**

### **\*\* Why is it important to adhere to proper protocols, increase social/physical distancing, and limit nonuse of masks during meals?**

Social distancing is the practice of increasing the space between individuals and decreasing the frequency of contact to reduce the risk of spreading a disease while also masking. DCIU has implemented CDC and CCHD guidelines of striving for at least 6 feet between individuals when possible. During meals, this distance is even more important. We recognize one is unable to wear a mask during meals so increasing of distancing of more than six feet becomes even more important. NBC's New York station showed a 48 second animated video on how COVID-19 spreads at a dinner table. This shows how important it is that we all ensure we are properly distanced and take seriously our safety and the safety of others. At mealtimes, staff should:

- ➔ Eat alone when at all possible and away from all other individuals
- ➔ If you need to eat your meal in your space or classroom where others are present: 1. Increase six feet distancing between you and others; 2. Do not talk to others as particles are released from one's mouth when one speaks and particles will travel when not wearing masks; 3. Wash your hands and space after a meal; and 4. Place mask immediately back on upon finishing eating.

*NBC Animated Video:*

<https://www-nbcnewyork-com.cdn.ampproject.org/c/s/www.nbcnewyork.com/news/national-international/animation-shows-how-coronavirus-spreads-at-dinner-table/2670617/?amp>

### **\*\* How do we handle social distancing when entering and existing a building, on the stairs, and in hallways?**

We recognize in some places (stairs or entrances to buildings) might be difficult to achieve six feet of distancing. Please remember, in these areas, one should only be less than six for only a few seconds. One must recognize these areas should only be used to get from one place to another. We should not stop and have conversations with others in these spaces or use these areas as a gathering space for conversations.

### **\*\* Can staff sit together if they are more than 6 feet apart and just wear shield?**

Staff need to maintain social distancing of 6 feet whenever possible and wear their masks. Staff can sit together but they must maintain 6 feet distance and wear a mask.

### **Is it OK for staff and students to fist-bump or high-five or handshake?**

No. The Chester County Health Department guidance states that physical contact such as handshakes, fist-bumps, high-five should be prohibited.

### **Are there any exceptions to social distancing, hygiene, or monitoring health for students with disabilities who have complex needs such as autism, intellectual disabilities or multiple disabilities?**

CCHD identified additional strategies when working with students with complex needs. If feasible, these additional strategies should be incorporated into programs:

#### *Social Distancing*

- When social distancing cannot be adhered to due to the special needs of the students, students and staff should be cohorted into small groups and be assigned separate rooms for learning. Students shall remain with the teacher of record or assigned to the class. Related service personnel may work with students in the classes. Related service personnel shall wash hands before and after working with the cohort of students. Related service personnel shall be granted the ability to work with various cohorts of students throughout the program day.

#### *Hygiene*

- Implement a cleaning schedule that requires more frequent cleaning of high touch surfaces in spaces used by students served by special education.
- Implement a mandatory hand washing schedule for students served by special education and all staff that interact with them.
- Strictly enforce adherence to Standard Precautions by all staff; if COVID-19 level PPE is required, then staff must wear mask, eye protection, gloves, and gowns.

#### *Monitoring Health*

- Strictly enforce at-home health monitoring prior to arrival at school for both students and staff.
- Provide consistent reinforcement to staff about self-monitoring of symptoms, the importance of remaining home if not feeling well.
- Task a staff member with the responsibility for visually monitoring the health of students and staff throughout the day.

### **How does one identify who to restrict as visitors and volunteers?**

DCIU and DCTS Health and Safety Plan provides guidance on this question. The guidance can be found on pages 13 and 14 of our plans. It is important to reiterate that DCIU is restricting all visitors to our programs unless under specific circumstances that must be preapproved by the program supervisor or director. Visitors also includes our family members and children. They should not be on site at any DCIU property.

### **Can programs celebrate Halloween and have our annual parades?**

The CDC recently issued guidance that trick or treating should not be practiced due to the activity being of high risk for possible transmission of COVID-19 and the danger of face masks being worn in conjunction with various costume masks. To comply with this guidance, DCIU will support activities in classrooms only with the same cohort of students around Halloween but will not support other activities that involve parades or students moving around the building or program.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

### **Is it ok to carpool amongst staff?**

No. The Chester County Health Department discourages carpooling among staff. DCIU supports this position. The reason carpooling is discouraged is to ensure one can maintain proper distancing of 6 feet from each other. Carpooling would also include going out to pick up lunch and a group of individuals getting in the car together.

## ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### **\*\* What is pandemic fatigue and how do we deal with it?**

*Pandemic fatigue* can occur when people get tired of the pandemic measures and become less likely to follow public health practices or simply begin to drown out those messages. A natural sense of *burnout* can happen since we have had to stick to these public health measures for such a prolonged period of time.

DCIU understands everyone is eager to return to normalcy as we use to know it. Right now, and into the foreseeable future, our normal is all of our protocols in place to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19. We know what works; our progress over the past few months is proof that we can reduce the spread of this virus. Now more than ever, we need to remain vigilant. Wash your hands, stay at least 6 feet away from people outside your household or social circle and while in schools, and wear your mask. These are simple things we can all do. Let us keep up the great work of everyone and keep the momentum going.

### **\*\* Staff travel to many locations to deliver our services to our students and families. How do we handle a situation when preschools, nonpublic schools, other educational entities or others do not follow the protocols of masking and social distancing?**

Contact your supervisor immediately. Supervisors shall work with their direct administrator to determine next steps.

### **\*\* When will DCIU allow visitors and others into our buildings?**

DCIU is being very restrictive on this issue and are not allowing visitors in our buildings or for in person professional development. DCIU plans to continue this until further notice. DCIU continually evaluates current conditions in our area, routinely consults with the Chester County Health Department, and our medical advisors. When DCIU believes we can relax this mitigation strategy, we will notify staff.

### **\*\* How can we keep our families informed of the latest information?**

DCIU has been sending to the administrative team parent updates via constant contact to share with all of our families. This has information on DCIU's health and safety plan and the many measures we have in place to support our mitigation efforts to combat the spread of COVID-19.

### **\*\* How do we report challenges with internet connections in some spaces within DCIU?**

DCIU has set up a service desk for all issues related to information technology and internet. If a staff member is having an issue, please email the service desk at [servicedesk@dciu.org](mailto:servicedesk@dciu.org).

### **\*\* How can DCIU address the many different opinions around the COVID-19 virus?**

DCIU has taken seriously the COVID-19 virus and has implemented many strategies to support the mitigation of spreading the virus. It is everyone's responsibility to follow the DCIU and DCTS Health and

Safety Plan and all information contained in this Question and Answers Document. DCIU will not take a political position on this issue.

**\*\* Why do we need to wear masks and social distance at least 6 feet away from our colleagues that we trust and feel comfortable working with daily?**

Scientific evidence is clear -- social distancing and wearing a mask help prevent people from spreading COVID-19, and masks also protect wearers from being infected themselves. It is important to keep everyone as safe as possible. By adhering to masking and social distancing, we all do our part in keeping ourselves and our colleague safer.