



ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES

August 25, 2020

To: The Arizona School Community

RE: Mask Use in Schools

Dear School Administrator,

Our schools play an integral role in the lives of our children. From an education perspective, they provide our children with the skills necessary to be successful as they grow. From a public health perspective, they provide so much more than just education: ongoing nutrition, social interaction, physical activity, access to health services, counseling when needed, and a safe environment for kids to learn and thrive. These vital components ensure our children will grow up to be educated, safe, and healthy. This is why it is so important that we take steps to reduce the risk of COVID-19 as we get our children and staff safely back into the classroom.

[Recent studies](#) show that a significant portion of individuals, including children, with COVID-19 lack symptoms and that even those who eventually develop symptoms can transmit the virus to others before showing symptoms. To reduce the spread of COVID-19, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that people wear masks in public settings when around people outside of their household, especially when other [social distancing](#) measures are difficult to maintain.

In [Executive Order 2020-51](#), Governor Ducey required all school districts and charter schools to develop and implement a policy to require face coverings, such as face masks or face shields, for all staff and students over the age of 5 and to develop and adopt a COVID-19 mitigation plan prior to opening a school building for on-site support services or in-person instruction. These two critical requirements combined with the guidance provided in the Arizona Department of Education's [Arizona Roadmap for Reopening Schools](#) and the Arizona Department of Health Services' Guidance for [Safely Returning to In-Person Instruction](#) provide a framework for all schools to prepare for a successful and safe re-entry.

We know this has been a difficult time for both parents and children. We appreciate the commitment and innovation seen by our schools to ensure our kids continue learning and thriving. And we know how eager they are to be back together in the classroom. The [Arizona School Benchmarks](#) indicate several counties have met or are close to meeting metrics for resuming a hybrid model. The primary goal is to keep our children, staff, and their families safe and healthy throughout the coming school year.

We want every student and staff member to have access to face masks, so we have partnered with Hanes to provide 5 free cloth masks to our schools and their families. Your staff, students, and their families can get free masks by visiting azhealth.gov/ordermasks.

Please promote the public health and safety of your community by requiring the use of face coverings by students, staff, and visitors while on campus.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Kathy Hoffman in black ink.

Kathy Hoffman, MS, CCC-SLP
Superintendent of Public Instruction
Arizona Department of Education

Handwritten signature of Cara M. Christ MD in black ink.

Cara M. Christ, MD, MS
Director
Arizona Department of Health Services