

Public Schools Branch

OPERATIONAL PROCEDURE

NON-MEDICAL MASKS	
<i>Policy Section</i> School and Workplace Health and Safety	<i>Procedure Number</i> 607.1
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Replaces: Operational Procedure 607.1 Non-Medical Masks – December 7, 2020	

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Public Schools Branch is committed to ensuring that staff and students have a healthy and safe environment in which to work and learn. Due to the current state of the Corona virus pandemic (COVID-19), measures are in place to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in our educational environments. Wearing a non-medical mask is one of the measures in place that can reduce the risk of transmitting COVID-19.
- 1.2 Attending school and work during a pandemic is new to all of us. Increased patience and understanding will be needed as schools implement non-medical mask wearing.

2.0 DEFINITIONS

- 2.1 Cohort - A group of staff and students who will remain, as much as possible, distanced from other groups of staff and students during the school day.
- 2.2 Education environment – A Public Schools Branch school, bus, or workplace.
- 2.3 Scheduled emergency drill – A planned exercise related to school safety, which may include but is not limited to a lockdown drill, fire drill, and bus evacuation drill.
- 2.4 Physical distancing - Physical distancing is one way to help reduce the spread of COVID-19 in our educational environments. It includes keeping at least two (2) meters, or six (6) feet between individuals and avoiding unnecessary close personal contact.
- 2.5 Transition - This includes but is not limited to:
 - a) When students/staff are moving in the hallways between classes,
 - b) When students/staff are moving in the hallways to use the washroom,
 - c) When students/staff are moving in the hallways to access another location in the building (e.g. walking in the hallways to the cafeteria, walking in the hallways to the exit, walking in the hallways to the gym).
- 2.6 Visitors - A visitor includes, but is not limited to, a parent, caregiver, volunteer, outside service provider, or delivery service. For greater clarity, substitute employees, Student Wellbeing Team members, PSB consultants, PSB Branch-based staff, and instructional coaches will follow the direction provided to staff in section 4.2 of this procedure.

3.0 PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF COVID-19

- 3.1 Non-medical masks may provide a barrier to help prevent respiratory droplets from travelling into the air and onto other people when the person wearing the non-medical mask coughs, sneezes, talks, or raises their voice. The non-medical mask is meant to protect other people in case the wearer is unknowingly infected.
- 3.2 Wearing a non-medical mask alone is not enough to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Other important measures include:
- a) Pre-screening
 - b) Proper hand hygiene
 - c) Following cough and sneeze etiquette
 - d) Staying home when feeling unwell
 - e) Physical distancing
 - f) Being in a cohort

4.0 NON-MEDICAL MASK USE IN EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENTS

4.1 Bus

- a) All students and staff shall wear a non-medical mask on the school bus.
- b) Bus drivers shall wear a non-medical mask when not seated, facing forward or driving the bus.

4.2 In-doors

- a) Students in grades K-6 are recommended to wear a non-medical mask indoors when physical distancing cannot be maintained.
- b) Students in grades 7-12 shall wear a non-medical mask indoors, except when, eating or drinking, participating in a physical activity (e.g. gym), engaged in an activity which prevents them from doing so (e.g. playing a wind instrument), or when it poses a safety concern (e.g. welding). Wearing a non-medical mask is not required when students are in a classroom and able to physically distance (6ft/2m).
- c) Staff working with students in grades 7-12 shall wear a non-medical mask indoors, except when eating or drinking, and when participating in a physical activity, (e.g. gym), engaged in an activity which prevents them from doing so (e.g. playing a wind instrument), when it poses a safety concern (e.g. welding) or when they are able to physically distance (6ft/2m) from all other individuals.
- d) All staff shall wear a non-medical mask indoors in common areas, during transitions, during scheduled emergency drills and whenever they are unable to maintain physical distance (6ft/2m) from others.
- e) All visitors to schools shall wear a non-medical mask indoors at all times.

5.0 EXEMPTIONS

- 5.1 The following people shall be exempt from the requirements in section 4 of this procedure:
- a) Anyone under the age of 2;
 - b) Anyone who is unable to put on or remove their non-medical mask without assistance;

- c) Anyone who is unable to wear a non-medical mask due to a physical or medical concern or limitation (i.e. a person with a facial deformity, severe skin condition, severe respiratory condition, etc.);
 - d) Anyone who is unable to wear a non-medical mask due to a cognitive impairment, an intellectual disability, an autism spectrum disorder diagnosis, or severe mental health condition, and are unable to understand the requirement for wearing a non-medical mask;
 - e) Anyone who is unable to wear a non-medical mask due to emotional trauma, or mental health disorder; or
 - f) Anyone who is reasonably accommodated by not wearing a non-medical mask in accordance with the PEI *Human Rights Act*.
- 5.2 The school will assess requests for an exemption on an individual basis and will determine when wearing a non-medical mask is not in the best interest of the student.
- 5.3 When needed, the school may request the assistance from a health care provider in making a determination about an exemption.
- 5.4 Staff who may be exempt from wearing a mask should consult with their supervisor.
- 5.5 Where appropriate and in collaboration with parents/guardians, school staff may work with students to increase their ability to wear a non-medical mask and/or increase the duration of non-medical mask wearing.

6.0 CHOOSING A NON-MEDICAL MASK

6.1 Non-medical masks should:

- a) Allow for easy breathing
- b) Fit securely to the head with ties or ear loops
- c) Maintain their shape after washing and drying
- d) Be changed as soon as possible if damp or dirty
- e) Be comfortable and not require frequent adjustment
- f) Be made of a least 2 layers of tightly woven material fabric like cotton or linen
- g) Be large enough to completely and comfortably cover the nose and mouth without gaping

6.2 Non-medical mask should not:

- a) Impair vision or interfere with tasks
- b) Be made of plastic or other non-breathable materials
- c) Be secured with tape or other inappropriate materials
- d) Be made exclusively of materials that easily fall apart, such as tissues
- e) Be shared with others
- f) Have exhalation valves (Masks with exhalation valves are not recommended because they do not protect others from COVID-19 and do not limit the spread of the virus.)

7.0 PROPERLY WEARING A NON-MEDICAL MASK

7.1 Anyone wearing a non-medical mask must follow proper mask-wearing procedures:

<https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/health-and-wellness/wearing-non-medical-masks-community>.

7.2 When wearing a non-medical mask, you should

- a) Check the mask for tears or holes
- b) Make sure the mask is clean and dry
- c) Wash or sanitize your hands before and after touching the mask
- d) Make sure your hair is away from your face
- e) Use the ear loops or ties to put the mask over your nose or mouth and secure to your head or ears with its ties or elastics
- f) Check that the mask fits snugly to the cheeks and fully covers your nose and mouth without any gaps
- g) Avoid touching your face

8.0 PROPERLY REMOVING A NON-MEDICAL MASK

8.1 When removing a mask, you should:

- a) Wash your hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds or use a hand sanitizer
- b) Remove the mask by un-tying it or removing the loops from your ears
- c) Avoid touching the front of the mask

9.0 STORING, CLEANING AND DISPOSING OF A NON-MEDICAL MASK

- 9.1 When masks are not in use, non-medical masks can be stored in a paper, fabric bag or hard shell case with the student/staff name on it. (A dedicated clean pencil case is a good option.)
- 9.2 When your reusable mask becomes damp or dirty, wash it with hot, soapy water and let it dry completely before wearing it again.
- 9.3 Reusable masks should be taken home and laundered (ideally every day, or at least several times per week) to ensure the mask stays clean. It is a good idea for students and staff to have minimally 2 masks so that they always have a clean mask at school when the other is at home being laundered. You can include a cloth mask with other laundry.
- 9.4 Damaged and disposable masks should be put in a regular garbage bin that is lined with a plastic bag. When emptying the bin, take care not to touch the used mask with your hands.

10.0 CROSS REFERENCE

- 10.1 *Education Act*
- 10.2 Operational Policy 605 - Safe and Caring Learning Environments
- 10.3 *Human Rights Act*
- 10.4 Non-medical masks and face coverings: Public Health Agency of Canada

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