

MASKING IN CHILD CARE GUIDE

Child Care Aware of NH

Powered by Southern New Hampshire Services



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Topic	Page
Introduction	pg. 3
How to Wear Masks	pg. 4
How to Support Children	pg. 5
How to Support Staff	pg. 8
How to Support Families	pg. 9
Policies	pg. 10
Resources	pg. 11
Acknowledgements	pg. 12



INTRODUCTION

Can face masks help slow the spread of the coronavirus?

“Yes, face masks combined with other preventive measures, such as frequent hand-washing and social distancing, help slow the spread of the virus.” - [Mayo Clinic](#)

Five early childhood programs collaboratively gathered together with Child Care Aware of NH staff to share their experiences, policies and their current practices on masking in their child care programs. This guidebook was created through this collaborative discussion and is full of helpful tips and links to support children, staff and families around using masks.

In the course of the conversations with these programs, there was one prevalent theme, they found that wearing masks was beneficial for the health of their programs and families. Under normal circumstances, they knew that children touch their face regularly. They felt that wearing a mask was much better than the alternative. Masking also became a teachable moment where staff and families could work together to support the child on how to wear a mask without touching it. As the children got used to the mask being on, they noticed a significant decrease in children touching/playing with them as they became actively engaged in their play.



SOME OTHER BENEFITS

- Fewer illness program wide.
- Less children are putting their hands in their mouths.
- Less children are licking toys or eating the snow.
- More children are giving up their pacifier quicker.
- Children’s faces are warmer when playing outdoors.
- Less children picking their noses.

HOW TO WEAR A MASK

“Masks are a critical step to help prevent people from getting and spreading COVID-19. A cloth mask offers some protection to you as well as protecting those around you. Wear a mask and take every day preventive actions in public settings and mass transportation, at events and gatherings, and anywhere you will be around other people.” – [How to Wear Masks](#)

From the CDC How to Wear a Mask:

- Wash your hands or use hand sanitizer before putting on your mask.
- Put the mask over your nose and mouth and secure it under your chin.
- Fit the mask snugly against the sides of your face, slipping the loops over your ears or tying the strings behind your head.
- If you have to continually adjust your mask, it doesn't fit properly, and you might need to find a different mask type or brand.
- Make sure you can breathe easily.

CDC RESOURCES

The Center for Disease Control offers many great resources around how to use and wash masks. Check out some of these resources:

[Your Guide to Masks](#)

- How to Select a Mask
- Special Considerations
- How to Wear Masks
- How to Clean Masks

[How to Store and Wash Masks](#)

- Store Masks
- Wash Masks
- Dry Masks

[How to Wear Masks](#)

- Wear Your Mask Correctly
- Take off Mask Carefully at Home
- Cold Weather

[Considerations for Wearing Masks](#)

- What You Need to Know
- Who Should and Should Not Wear Masks
- Types of Masks
- Other Types of Face Protection
- Masks Adaptations and Alternatives



HOW TO SUPPORT CHILDREN

“It’s a good idea to get your child used to several different masks. For one, it means you’ll always have a couple options handy even when one is in the laundry. For another, one of the best ways to get kids to cooperate with tasks is to give them a choice.” - [7 Ways to Introduce Your Child to Wearing a Mask](#)

“Some masks work better than others to help stop the spread of COVID-19” - [Considerations for Wearing Masks](#)

There are many ways to support children with masking: through the program curriculum, including books, songs, pictures of children, families and staff with masks on and puppets.

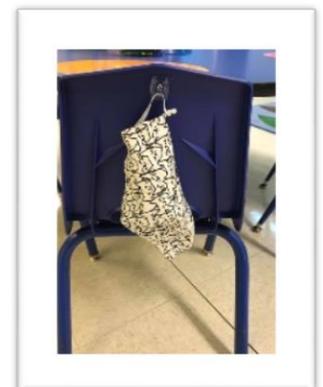
One early childhood program made small masks for their dramatic play area out of paper towel tubes, to be used on stuffed animals and dolls. Another program used paper towels as the masks in addition, other programs used small cloth for masks.

Many of these programs shared that they created “Mask Rules” with the children, that spoke to when and where they could have a mask break themselves and how the mask was to be worn. Involving the children in the creation of these rules, helped the children have ownership over the rules. This also encouraged group problem solving skills and made it much easier for the staff to support the children in following best practice.



Tips for Supporting Children with Wearing Masks:

- Have children be part of the problem-solving process around implementation of mask rules in accordance with [NH’s COVID-19 Child Care Reopening Guidance](#).
- Never use harsh words, threats or punishment if the child doesn’t wear a mask. Encourage children to wear masks, you should never force them to comply, take away a toy, play time or food.
- Create visuals or a social story to support individual children that may need one-on-one support around wearing a mask. [Here is an example](#) of a social story that you could adapt for your program to meet [NH’s COVID-19 Child Care Reopening Guidance](#).
- Allow for opportunities for children to play with small masks on dolls or stuffed animals.
- Provide each child with a bin or ask a parent to provide a backpack. Every day the child comes to school with two sandwich size bags one labeled “Dirty” and one labeled “Clean”. The child places worn masks in the dirty mask bag and grabs a clean one out of the clean bag as needed.



HOW TO SUPPORT CHILDREN

VIDEOS

- [Fluffster Wears a Mask](#) – Sesame Street
- [Wearing a Mask Helps Stop the Spread of Germs](#)



BOOKS

- *Heroes Wear Masks: Elmo's Super Adventure Sesame Workshop*
- *Smiling from Ear to Ear: Wearing Masks While Having Fun* by Kaitlyn Chu
- *Masked Ninja: A Children's Book About Kindness and Preventing the Spread of Racism and Viruses* by Mary Nhin
- *Lucy's Mask* by Lisa Thompson
- *The Task of the Mask* [e-book](#)

SONGS

**(Sing to the tune of
Frère Jacques)**

Wear your mask
Wear your mask
Hide your nose
Hide your nose
This will keep you safe
This will keep me safe
The germs will slow
The germs will go

**Sing to the tune of
Mary Had a Little Lamb)**

[Child's name] has a
[descriptor] mask
[descriptor] mask
[descriptor] mask
[Child's name] has a
[descriptor] mask
Thanks for keeping us safe!

HOW TO SUPPORT CHILDREN

SONGS

**(Sing to the tune of
Twinkle Twinkle Little Star)**

Lots of heroes wear a mask
This is all we really ask
Doctors, nurses, ninjas too
Only want to protect you!
When you wear your mask you see
You show your love for you and me.

**(Sing to the tune of
The More We Get Together)**

Whenever we're together
Together
Together
Whenever we're together
Please wear your mask
'Cause your germs are your
germs
And my germs are my germs
Whenever we're together
Please wear your mask.

"My mask protects you and your mask protects me"

[Tips for Helping Kids Wear Masks](#)



HOW TO SUPPORT STAFF

"Many professionals who support children and families have a tendency to focus on everyone else's needs first, but this can diminish their effectiveness over time." [The Importance of Self-Care for Early Care and Education Professionals](#)

There are a variety of ways to support staff during this time. Here are some suggestions from child care providers in NH:

- Offer Mask Breaks: Provide intentional staff time to have a break from masking. Consider letting staff take breaks outside. Be sure to provide an active eating break, where staff can take their mask off to eat, with social distancing, in a break room.
- Offer Self-Care Opportunities: Promote short walks outside, provide activity tip sheets on meditation, play soothing music in the break out room, etc.
- Provide Mask Extenders or Headbands: These protect staffs' ears from long days of mask wearing. Some providers shared they used homemade ones or bought a pack of them off Amazon.
- Provide Different Styles and Brands of Masks: Provide staff with masks that vary in materials, such as homemade cloth or surgical ones, so they can find the fit they like best. A few providers shared that a brand favorite was masks from Old Navy. Visit this link for guidance on [types of effective masks](#).
- Provide Aprons: Provide staff with ½ aprons that can hold hand sanitizer, pens/sharpies and an extra mask for them and a child.



Tips for Supporting Staff:

- Get Staff Feedback: Ask staff what is working? What is difficult? Include them in the decision-making process.
- Engage Staff in Self-Care: Ask staff what they do for self-care? Provide them with resources to support them in managing their health, stress and well-being.
- Provide Gestures of Appreciation: Write notes or provide a small token of appreciation.
- For Staff that wear glasses, find a mask that fits closely over your nose or has a nose wire to help reduce fogging. Consider using an antifogging spray that is made for eyeglasses.

HOW TO SUPPORT FAMILIES

“Another benefit of wearing masks is that they may keep people from touching their mouths and faces, which is another way COVID-19 can be spread. There are many types of masks, but cloths masks are best choice for the general public and families should choose a mask that is most comfortable while still providing a secure fit.” - [Masking Mythbusters](#)

“While it may be a challenge for very young children not to fidget with their face covering, as mask-wearing becomes routine and reinforced by adults and peers, they will learn to follow directions. Just like children understand that they must wear bicycle helmets and buckle into their car seats, they will learn to wear masks when needed.” - [Masks or Cloth Face Coverings for Children during COVID-19](#)

“Know that it's normal for young kids to react with caution to things they don't expect, understand, or feel familiar with. Let them take their time to warm up to what's new.” - [Helping Kids Get Used to Masks](#)

Tips for Supporting Families:

- Create a clear policy based on [NH's COVID-19 Child Care Reopening Guidance](#) on masking, so all families know what is expected of them.
- Provide families with a list of what to bring every day.
- Share resources in regular and varied forms of communication.
- Share with families how their child is doing with masking and what masks work the best for their child.
- Create an electronic form or checklist that families can fill out at home, to facilitate a more efficient drop off process. Google has been used by these programs and is recommended as an option. Here is a [sample](#) from an early childhood program.
- Model mask wearing behavior for the families and children.
- Have a stash of extra masks available for the child that runs out or the family that is unable to buy their own masks.
- Provide families with tokens of appreciation. One program used individual snacks and created sayings for them, showing their gratitude.



POLICIES

Staff

“I will promote the safety of all children, families and other staff members. I will give gentle and respectful reminders to my peers and families as necessary and report any unsafe behavior from families or staff to my Director.” [Pandemic Agreement for Staff](#) – Nurture and Nature Children’s Center

Family

“We need your help in keeping children and staff healthy.” [Parent Pandemic Information Guide](#) - Nurture and Nature Children’s Center



RESOURCES

Websites

- [NH Department of Health and Human Services: COVID-19](#)
- [NH Department of Health and Human Services: COVID-19 Parent Resources](#)
- [Your Guide to Masks | CDC](#)
- [How to Wear Masks | CDC](#)
- [How to Wash and Store Masks | CDC](#)
- [Considerations When Wearing a Mask | CDC](#)
- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) frequently asked questions | CDC](#)
- [Coronavirus Covid-19: Helping Children Get Used to Masks](#)
- [How to get kids to wear a mask to prevent coronavirus \(COVID-19\) spread | MD Anderson Cancer Center](#)
- [Mask Mythbusters: Five Common Misconceptions About Kids and Cloth Face Coverings](#)

Online PDFs

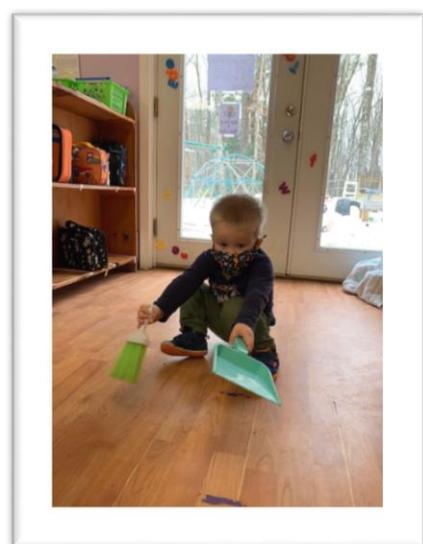
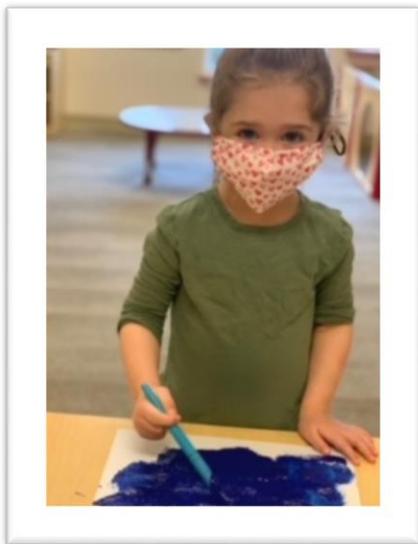
- [NH DHHS: Using Cloth Face Coverings to Help Slow the Spread of COVID-19](#)
- [NH DHHS: COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [A Toolkit: For Helping Your Child Wear a Mask During COVID-19](#)
- [Child Masking Inquiry](#)
- [Parent Letter About Starting Masking: Emerson COVID Update 11-13-2020](#)
- [Parent Letter: Emerson Mask Update Ways to Introduce Your Child to Wearing a Mask](#)
- [Parent Letter: Emerson Mask Update 12-1-20](#)
- [Emerson School for Preschoolers Daily Questionnaire & Health Screen](#)
- [OEC-COVID-19-Mask-Wearing-Kids-Superhero-English](#)
- [OEC-COVID-19-Sample-Policy-Mask-Wearing-Final](#)



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