

COVID-19: Guidance for Educational Institutions from the Wyoming Department of Health

October 1, 2020

Background

Public health orders continue and are modified periodically. All orders are designed to limit the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Key definitions and order provisions are contained in each order. Questions regarding enforcement and interpretation of orders should be directed to your County Public Health Offices.

The orders continue to permit educational institutions – like K-12 schools, universities, colleges, and trade schools – to provide in-person instruction for all students in groups of up to 50 persons with spacing guidelines. All plans for re-opening should follow all applicable requirements and policies set forth by the Wyoming Department of Education (WDE). See WDE's *Smart Start Guidance* [here](#).

This document provides guidance from the Wyoming Department of Health for educational institutions.

Copies of the public health orders can be found here: <https://covid19.wyo.gov/>

General Guidance

The Wyoming Department of Health recommends the following guidelines to educational institutions:

1. Groups shall be limited to 50 people (students and teachers) in each separate room, subject to standard rules and regulations regarding class size.
2. Six feet of separation between individuals should be maintained as much as possible.
3. Up to 250 people may be allowed in larger rooms (e.g., cafeterias, auditoriums) if 6 feet of separation between individuals can be maintained.
4. Students, teachers, and school staff shall wear face coverings both indoors and outdoors in situations where 6 feet of separation cannot be maintained. School districts can be more restrictive than the current statewide orders as long as they are in compliance with all other laws and regulations applicable to schools. The following are excepted from the requirement to wear a face covering:
 - a. Children who are younger than three years of age.
 - b. Individuals with a medical condition, mental health condition, or disability that prevents wearing a face covering, including an individual with a medical condition for whom wearing a face covering could cause harm or dangerously obstruct breathing; K-12 schools shall require documentation from the student's parent/guardian, or the student's medical provider, that the student meets this exception.
 - i. At the school district's discretion, documentation can be either from a parent/guardian or from a medical provider. If a school district so chooses, it can require that the documentation come from a medical provider.
 - ii. For purposes of determining whether the request falls within this exception, school districts may determine the level of explanation they will require as to the reason for the request.
 - c. Individuals who are unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove a face covering without assistance.
 - d. Individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing while communicating with others, or individuals who are communicating with an individual who is deaf or hard of hearing, where the ability to see the mouth is

essential for communication, in which case it is recommended that a face shield or alternative protection such as a plexiglass barrier be used (a face shield is a personal protective equipment device which protects the person's entire face from potentially infectious materials).

- e. Individuals who have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, that would necessitate exempting the individual from wearing a face covering.
 - f. Children for whom a face covering may interfere with the ability to effectively participate in educational activities or may increase the risk of disease transmission because of increased hand to face contact.
 - i. Exceptions under this provision may include, by way of example but are not limited to, students who are actively engaged in playing an instrument or students whose behaviors are negatively affected by wearing a face covering for long periods of time.
 - ii. Requests made under this provision are subject to school district approval. For purposes of determining whether the request falls within this exception, school districts may determine the level of explanation they will require as to the reason for the request.
 - g. Individuals engaged in athletic activities, including informal active play.
5. Six (6) feet of separation for students during transportation to and from the facility must be maintained as much as possible, and face coverings shall be worn during transportation when 6 feet separation cannot be maintained
 - a. It is recommended that records be maintained of children and adults transported and which vehicle they were in for contact tracing purposes, if necessary.
 - b. If eating and drinking are permitted during bus transport, brief mask removal for eating and/or drinking is permitted.
 6. Outdoor and indoor events attended by non-students (e.g., parents, families, or members of the public), must comply with the current provisions of the Continuation of Public Health Order #2.
 7. Students, teachers, and school staff must perform frequent hand hygiene (**wash hands frequently with soap and water** for at least 20 seconds. When soap and water is not available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol volume).
 8. Individuals with symptoms of COVID-19, or exposure to an individual with COVID-19 within the last 14 days, may not attend the institution unless otherwise directed by public health officials.
 9. All persons in the facility should be encouraged to cover their coughs and sneezes in a tissue or with an elbow.
 10. Educational institutions should engage in frequent and thorough cleaning on a daily basis, following all applicable regulations regarding cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting surfaces and other areas.
 11. Signs should be posted instructing and educating staff, students, and parents on staying home when sick, routine measures for hygiene, and mitigation of respiratory illness spread. The WDH recommends that schools communicate with parents and students about the importance of staying home when sick. The CDC has [specific resources](#) for schools and [numerous print resources](#).
 12. Facilities such as libraries and gymnasiums may be open for student use following distancing protocols. For guidance on sports, the Wyoming High School Activities Association (WHSAA) [Smart Start Guidance](#) and WDH Guidance for [Youth Sports](#) should be consulted.

More resources from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for schools and child care programs can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/index.html>.

For more information about the COVID-19 outbreak please visit: health.wyo.gov or cdc.gov.