

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

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April 1, 2021

## 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 – including K-12 schools, universities, colleges, and trade schools – to provide in-person instruction for all students. Beginning April 1, 2021, the orders pertaining to educational institutions have several changes, including removing room capacity limitations and allowing for public health officials to make spacing recommendations based on up-to-date scientific evidence about COVID-19 transmission.

School operations should follow all applicable requirements and policies set forth by the Wyoming Department of Education (WDE). See [WDE's Smart Start Guidance](#).

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

Copies of the [public health orders and guidance](#) are listed on our website.

## General Guidance

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

1. As of April 1, 2021, there are no longer limitations on how many students and staff can be in a certain room. The 50 person limit per room and 250 person limit in larger rooms has been removed. Institutions should continue to follow spacing and masking recommendations.
2. Six feet of separation between individuals should be maintained as much as possible, with the following exceptions in K-12 schools:
  - a. In K-12 schools, when students are wearing face coverings, three feet of separation between students is adequate in most settings. K-12 schools should attempt to maintain 3 feet of separation between students wearing face coverings.
  - b. Middle schools and high schools should consider separating students wearing face coverings by more than three feet if possible in counties with high transmission levels if that can be done while still offering in-person instruction to all students (see [color-coded data measures for each Wyoming county](#)).
  - c. Three feet of separation in K-12 schools applies to students wearing face coverings only; six feet of separation should still be maintained as much as possible between adults (school staff) and students, and between individual adults. Six feet of separation should also be maintained as much as possible between students when masks cannot be worn, such as when eating.
3. Students, teachers, school staff, and visitors (including parents, families, and members of the public) shall wear face coverings indoors in situations where 6 feet of separation cannot be maintained. Masks are not required outdoors. 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 individuals 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 or performances.
  - h. When an individual is eating or drinking.
4. Wyoming public health orders require that six (6) feet of separation during transportation to and from the facility be maintained as much as possible, and require that face coverings be worn during transportation when 6 feet separation cannot be maintained.
    - a. For students being transported to K-12 schools, three feet of separation is adequate in most situations where students are masked. Schools should attempt to maintain at least three feet of separation to the extent possible.
  5. Indoor events attended by non-students (e.g., parents, families, or members of the public), must comply with the following provisions:
    - a. All individuals must wear a face covering at all times, with the exceptions described in #3 above.
    - b. Social distancing should be maintained between individual groups to the extent possible.
    - c. There are no capacity limits for indoor events with five hundred or fewer spectators/attendees.
    - d. An indoor event of more than five hundred spectators/attendees must be held at no more than 50% of the venue's (or room's) capacity.
  6. There are no required provisions for outdoor events attended by non-students. However, WDH recommends that individual groups social distance to the extent possible, and that masks be worn when six feet of distancing between groups can't be maintained.

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.
  - a. While WDH recommends a 14-day quarantine period after an exposure to COVID-19 as the best way to prevent further transmission of COVID-19, WDH does allow shortened quarantine periods of 7 days (with a negative test on day 5 or later) or 10 days according to [CDC guidance](#). Schools can choose to stay with the 14-day quarantine period or adopt one or both of the shortened quarantine options.
  - b. Individuals who have received a COVID-19 vaccine and are fully immunized do not need to quarantine after an exposure to COVID-19. An individual is considered fully immunized once 14 days have passed after the final dose in the vaccine series.
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.

**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](http://health.wyo.gov) or [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov).**