



August 17, 2020

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

*Texas Medical Association president Diana L. Fite, MD, and Texas Pediatric Society president Tammy Camp, MD, release the following statement regarding face coverings in Texas schools:*

The Texas Medical Association and Texas Pediatric Society support use of masks and face coverings on school campuses to minimize quarantines and closures due to COVID-19 this fall. We urge all school systems to maintain infection control plans with policies requiring universal use of masks at all practical times. Use of face coverings in combination with other infection control measures should continue until an effective vaccine is widely distributed.

When worn correctly, masks and face coverings slow COVID-19 spread by blocking respiratory droplets released when a person talks, raises their voice, coughs, or sneezes.[[1]](#footnote-2) Every additional unmasked person in a confined space increases the likelihood of viral transmission for all individuals. Masks and face coverings slow viral spread even when wearers are unknowingly infected. In school environments where physical distancing of at least 6 feet can be difficult to maintain, the importance of correct mask wearing grows.

Almost all staff and students can wear masks safely. Blanket exemptions for face coverings or masks are not appropriate unless for medically contraindicated categories. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) list conditions for which face coverings are not recommended:[[2]](#footnote-3)

1. Children under age 2;
2. Anyone who has trouble breathing, is unconscious, or is incapacitated;
3. Anyone unable to remove the face covering without assistance;
4. A child with a significant behavioral or psychological issue undergoing treatment that is exacerbated specifically by a face covering;
5. A child with severe autism or with extreme developmental delay who may become agitated or anxious wearing a mask; and
6. A child with a facial deformity that causes airway obstruction.

We recommend [CDC](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/cloth-face-cover.html) and [AAP](https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/Cloth-Face-Coverings-for-Children-During-COVID-19.aspx)’s tips and resources to teach desired mask wearing behavior, demonstrate correct fit over the nose and mouth, and positively reinforce compliance with mask wearing expectations.

Resuming in-person classroom instruction safely and without interruption is everyone’s goal. With COVID-19 transmission still widespread, consistent use of masks on school campuses reduces risk to students and staff, and increases the likelihood of successful returns to campus.

*Individuals should consult with their personal physician for medical advice and review the current CDC guidelines designed to reduce individual health risks in schools. These considerations are meant to supplement –* ***not replace*** *– any state, local, territorial, or tribal health and safety laws, rules, and regulations with which schools must comply. See* [*https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/schools.html*](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/schools.html) *for more information.*

1. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/cloth-face-cover.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. <https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/covid-19-planning-considerations-return-to-in-person-education-in-schools/> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)