



Transitioning to **MASK-WEARING FOR YOUNG CHILDREN**

The Office of Early Childhood (OEC) requirements for group size and mask wearing (**found in Memo #29**) are part of a system of supports to protect the health and safety of children and staff. New recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics and The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guided these requirements. Mask-wearing and limited group size are among strategies in programs to help keep children and staff safe, including hand washing, social distancing, and increased cleaning and disinfection.

Here's what you need to know:

- ◆ Child care programs are allowed groups of up to 16 children per space. (Effective August 20th)
- ◆ Children age three and older are required to wear a mask while in child care programs. (Effective September 21st)
 - ◇ Children who have just turned three and children newly enrolled will have two months time to get used to mask-wearing.
 - ◇ Children will have mask breaks throughout the day for eating, drinking, resting, sleeping, and outdoor play.
 - ◇ If children are indoors without masks on, providers will maximize the distance between children to at least 6 feet wherever possible.
 - ◇ Some children may be unable to wear a mask due to a medical condition, disability, special health care or developmental need. If you think this may be the case for your child, talk with your program director and your child's pediatrician.
 - ◇ Child care programs have until October 19, 2020, to help children get comfortable wearing masks. Ask your child care program director when mask-wearing will start.

WHY MASKS?



Masks that cover the nose and mouth have been shown to be one of the best ways to slow the spread of the COVID-19 virus, along with hand washing, social distancing, and other safety steps.



If someone has COVID-19, even if they don't feel sick, tiny droplets that contain the COVID-19 virus can come out of their nose and mouth when they breathe, talk, or sneeze. A mask stops those droplets from spreading in the air.



Wearing a mask helps keep everyone safe. It's an important part of being a good community member, a skill we want children to learn.

Some questions you might have:

- ◆ **What if my child takes their mask off when they are supposed to be wearing it?** Mask-wearing is one of many hygiene and social skills children learn, like hand washing and treating others with kindness. Child care providers are helping kids build mask-wearing skills in a fun and supportive way.
- ◆ **What is the best kind of mask for my child?** There are many different types of masks available – surgical masks, cloth masks, over the ears, around the head and more. The most important features of a face covering for children in a child care program are: **(1) it completely covers the nose and mouth of the wearer, (2) it is comfortable enough to wear for long periods of time, and (3) it fits snugly against the cheeks.**

For more information visit www.ctoec.org/covid-19/child-care-during-covid-19



BUILDING Mask-Wearing Skills



Mask-wearing may be new to your child, but like anything with young children, learning a new skill just takes practice and encouragement. Mask-wearing helps children learn about staying safe and healthy and how important it is to respect and take care of each other. Your positive attitude about mask-wearing will help them adjust. Here are some tips to help your little ones!



Practice mask-wearing at home to help your child get used to it. Dedicate a part of your day to mask-wearing, like screen time or walks outside.



Talk about why we wear masks. They help keep our germs to ourselves, just like washing our hands! When they wear their mask, they are doing a great job keeping themselves and everyone else safe.



Show them a picture of themselves wearing a mask or look in the mirror while wearing one and talk about it.



Decorate them or pick out a favorite color so they're more personalized and fun.



Let them see you properly wearing your mask, and show them the proper way to put on and take off a mask.



Remind them that behind your mask you are smiling!



KIDS ARE AMAZING, AND THEY CAN DO THIS!

Remember to give lots of encouragement for trying and learning something new!

For great resources to help your kids with wearing a mask, see below:

Share this great presentation with kids to teach them about mask-wearing: https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/docs/Wearing-Masks_Story.pdf

Tips and information about mask-wearing: www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/Cloth-Face-Coverings-for-Children-During-COVID-19.aspx

How to properly care for your mask: <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/coronavirus/coronavirus-how-to-care-for-your-face-mask>

How to wash face masks: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/how-to-wash-cloth-face-coverings.html>

How to safely remove, clean, and store masks: <https://www.today.com/health/reusing-face-masks-how-remove-clean-store-safely-t180985>

For more information, visit ctoec.org/covid-19

