




# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION



TO: Superintendents of Schools with Preschool Classrooms

FROM: Dr. Miguel A. Cardona, Commissioner of Education 

DATE: September 17, 2020

SUBJECT: Group Size and Mask Requirements during the COVID-19 Pandemic  
(Companion Guidance for Schools with Office of Early Childhood Memo 29)

*This is a working document, which may be updated frequently due to the rapidly changing response to this pandemic emergency and ongoing Federal guidance updates.*

This memo is published in conjunction with the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) Memo 29 to address consistent rules for early childhood care in both child care settings and public schools. Please review the related [OEC Coronavirus Memo #29 Group Size and Mask Requirements as part of a system of protections against COVID-19](#) for additional considerations to assist with required policy development for mask wearing in preschool.

On September 4, 2020, Governor Lamont issued [Executive Order No. 9](#), directing the Commissioner of Education and Commissioner of Early Childhood, in consultation with the Commissioner of Public Health, to issue binding guidance, rules, or orders to promote the safety of adults and children in public schools and child care settings, including camps, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic or its effects. This guidance is issued pursuant to that order.

In light of the evolving guidance from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) related to mask wearing for young children, and based upon input from our Connecticut Department of Public Health, the following requirements apply to preschool classrooms in operation in public schools.

### **Requirements**

1. **The allowable group size in one space is 16 children.**
  - a. This change was effective August 20, 2020 and will continue unless modified.
  
2. **Children 3 years of age and older are required to wear masks while in preschool programs in public schools.**
  - a. This change is effective September 21, 2020, and will continue during the duration of the public health and civil preparedness emergencies unless earlier modified by the Commissioner of Education.
  - b. Preschool programs in public schools must create a written policy for mask wearing and provide such policy to staff and families. The policy should address the school's approach to supporting any individual Pre-K child's developmental difficulty keeping a mask on to avoid exclusion, and the policy should also outline the response to a parent or guardian who refuses to permit their child to wear one. In addition, the policy should detail exceptions to the mask

requirement for children in preschool including, but not limited to, cases where a child with a medical condition or special health care need for whom wearing a mask or face covering would be contrary to their health or safety, for developmental reasons as determined by the program, and where a PPT or Section 504 team determines, it is appropriate to allow an exception for a child with a disability. In creating a policy, the program should consider:

- i. [updated CDC](#) and [American Academy of Pediatrics guidance](#) on the wearing of masks;
  - ii. Protocols for the wearing and removal of masks as guided by the [CDC](#).
  - iii. [Guidance](#) to assist children with the social emotional aspects of mask wearing available on the OEC website. Also refer to Addendum 11: [Interim Guidance for the Use of Face Coverings in Schools during COVID-19](#).
  - iv. How to address non-compliance by children as they adjust to mask wearing considering gentle reminders and other least restrictive means of supporting compliance. Refer to Addendum 10: [Reframing and Reopening School Discipline Amidst COVID-19 Guidance](#) for additional considerations.
  - v. Addendum 2: [COVID Guidance and Considerations for Preschool Located in Public Schools](#) remains relevant to the continued maintenance of the environment during the COVID-19 public health emergency.
- c. Public school preschool programs should consider implementing the comprehensive exceptions outlined by the [OEC available here](#), and may develop a phase-in plan extending up to October 19, 2020, to allow for acclimating children to mask wearing and for time to work with families on this transition. The phase-in plan may include education for children, families and staff about how to properly wear, remove, store, wash, and dispose of masks.

These two policy changes are implemented within the context of multiple layered mitigation strategies, including social distancing, good ventilation, enhanced cleaning and disinfection, frequent hand cleaning, limited group size (cohorting), and efficient identification, isolation, and exclusion of sick students and staff.