Delaware Division of Public Health (DPH) Updates Face Mask Guidance for Children

Children entering kindergarten and older must wear face masks in public settings

WILMINGTON, Del. — As Delaware families consider a safe return to school, Governor Carney and the Division of Public Health on Monday announced an update to Delaware's face coverings guidance for children.

All children who are in kindergarten or older must wear face coverings in public settings, including school buildings, according to the updated DPH guidance.

All children 2 years of age and older are strongly encouraged to wear face coverings in public. Children younger than 2 must not wear face coverings due to suffocation risk. A child with a medical condition that makes it hard to breathe or a disability that prevents the child from wearing a face covering is not required to wear one.

The updated guidance will be included this week in a modification to Governor Carney's State of Emergency order.

> *"The evidence could not be more clear that wearing face coverings is the best thing we can all do to keep our communities healthy," said **Governor Carney**. "I know masks can be uncomfortable at times for children and adults. But if we stay vigilant and work together, we'll continue to make real progress against this virus."*

The State of Delaware will not enforce mask use among children, but encourages parents to refer to materials from DPH and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for information on wearing face coverings properly, and the benefits of wearing a face covering during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Click here for more information about face coverings.

"Organizations such as the American Academy of Pediatrics are emphasizing now more than before that face coverings can be safely and easily worn by the vast majority of children," said **Dr. Karyl Rattay, Director of the Delaware Division of Public Health**. "Newer studies convey that all age groups are susceptible to infection. The good news is the most infections in the younger age group of 5 – 10 appear to be mild. And although spread from this age group to others appears low, it still may occur. Therefore, use of face coverings in this age group is an important measure that can help prevent that spread."

Anyone with a question about COVID-19, whether related to medical or social service needs, should call Delaware 2-1-1. Individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing can text their ZIP code to 898-211. Hours of operation are 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Friday; 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday.

Questions can also be submitted by email at DPHCall@delaware.gov.

DPH will continue to update the public as more information becomes available. For the latest on Delaware's response, go to de.gov/coronavirus.

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