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## Maintaining Continuity of Learning By Requiring Face Coverings In All Schools

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Dear Oregon School and District Leaders:

Thank you for your steady partnership as we navigate the challenges and shifts in preparation for next school year.

Today [Governor Brown directed the Oregon Health Authority \(OHA\) and the Oregon Department of Education \(ODE\)](#) to **create a rule requiring face coverings in all indoor school settings, both public and private, for all individuals two years and older, including all students, staff, contractors, volunteers and visitors.** This decision is in response to the sharp uptick in the spread of COVID-19 in Oregon and the emergence of the highly transmissible Delta variant of COVID-19.

**This rule will take effect upon adoption.** Summer school and other summer programming students and staff will also be required to wear face coverings when the rule is instituted.

### **Maintaining Continuity of Learning By Maintaining Health And Safety**

Universal and correct use of face coverings keeps kids learning in person, which we all agree is best for students. Two of the most important tools the state has to control COVID-19 are vaccination and face covering. However, currently children under the age of 12 are not eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccines authorized for emergency use. In order to protect students under age 12, individuals who are not vaccinated, and those with underlying health conditions that make them more susceptible to complications from COVID-19, as well as to minimize the disruption of student education in schools because of exposure to a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19, requiring universal use of face coverings inside schools is necessary.

**The rule will include include provisions for:**

- Eating or drinking.
- Playing a musical instrument that requires using the mouth.
- Swimming or other water sports.
- Engaging in a sport in which wearing a mask could be a strangulation hazard such as gymnastics or wrestling.
- Nothing in the rule is intended to prohibit a school from complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Rehabilitation Act, or the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
- A school that violates the rule will be subject to civil penalties.

The [Ready Schools, Safe Learners \(RSSL\) Resiliency Framework](#) will be updated in the next few days to reflect this change.

I realize this is a significant shift in direction. The vast majority of the recommendations in the [RSSL Resiliency Framework](#) remain advisory and in control of local decision makers. It is noted within the framework, “*Changes in the amount of community transmission of COVID-19, the severity of illness associated with new variants of the SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes COVID-19, or the availability of vaccination for children younger than 12 years old may warrant changes to the state’s recovery efforts during the school year. The Resiliency Framework will be updated to reflect any changes...ODE and OHA will continue to monitor guidance updates from the CDC, and will continue to align this recommendation framework as needed.*” It is imperative that we remain nimble as state and local partners to address the impacts of the global pandemic.

I understand this update may bring questions. Our hope is to provide you with the assistance you need to implement this new requirement with fidelity. Please contact ODE at [ODE.COVID19@ode.state.or.us](mailto:ODE.COVID19@ode.state.or.us) with any questions.

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