

# Coronavirus Disease 2019<sup>1</sup> (COVID-19): Key Preparedness and Response Considerations

READINESS AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT FOR SCHOOLS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER

FACT SHEET

## Ordering Masks and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for Schools

Keeping the Whole School Community Safe in School Buildings

### Using Masks and PPE as Mitigation Tools

As school buildings plan to fully reopen according to decisions made in collaboration with local public health departments, education agency leaders and safety planning partners are implementing protocols for preventing or mitigating infectious disease transmission. Federal agencies have created a variety of resources and tools to help organizations, including schools and school districts, understand the mitigation strategies they can consider implementing to protect students, staff, faculty, and visitors from the COVID-19 pandemic. Providing face masks and PPE is one important workplace control, as noted in the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19, that can be used to protect the whole school community. (You can access a copy of the OSHA Guidance via the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's [CDC] "[Community, Work, and School](#)" Web page as well as the resources section of this fact sheet.)

There are a variety of considerations for education agencies as they explore the use of masks and PPE in the school setting, including understanding recommended types of PPE based on membership and the role different people within the school community play (e.g., school nurses may require full body coverings, administrators may opt to integrate plastic barriers in main offices, food service personnel may be required to wear face masks and gloves); purchasing issues with access and availability; proper usage and disposal of masks and PPE; and ensuring that the needs of those with access and functional needs are met when developing proper use protocols and trainings.

### Implementation Tips for Masks and PPE At a Glance

- ✓ Design mask and PPE usage requirements based on role.
- ✓ Confirm state requirements and recommendations.
- ✓ Create virtual and in-person trainings on how to properly use masks and PPE gear.
- ✓ Develop a mask and PPE self-inspection checklist.
- ✓ Review the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's PPE Burn Rate Calculator.
- ✓ Ask local, state, and regional partners for support.

Learn more about each of the tips above via pages 2–6 of this fact sheet.

<sup>1</sup> According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, this novel coronavirus is named "SARS-CoV-2," while the disease it causes is named "coronavirus disease 2019." (Available at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/summary.html>, last accessed November 12, 2020.)

## Understanding Types of PPE

Requirements for the types of PPE to be used in the school and campus setting may vary by state. However, it is important for education agency leaders to sit down with safety planning teams and partners to think through which of their school community's staff and faculty (e.g., teachers, aides, school nurses, bus drivers) have the highest frequency of contact with students and which personnel (e.g., administrators and office staff) may have the highest frequency of contact with families, visitors, and other school personnel.

While conversations around masks and PPE in the educational environment primarily focus on the use of face masks as a preventative measure, types of PPE that may also be considered for use within school buildings and classrooms vary. Types of PPE may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Gowns
- Gloves
- Respirators
- Face shields
- Space barriers
- Aprons/smocks
- Safety glasses/goggles and protective eyewear



## Design mask and PPE usage requirements based on role.



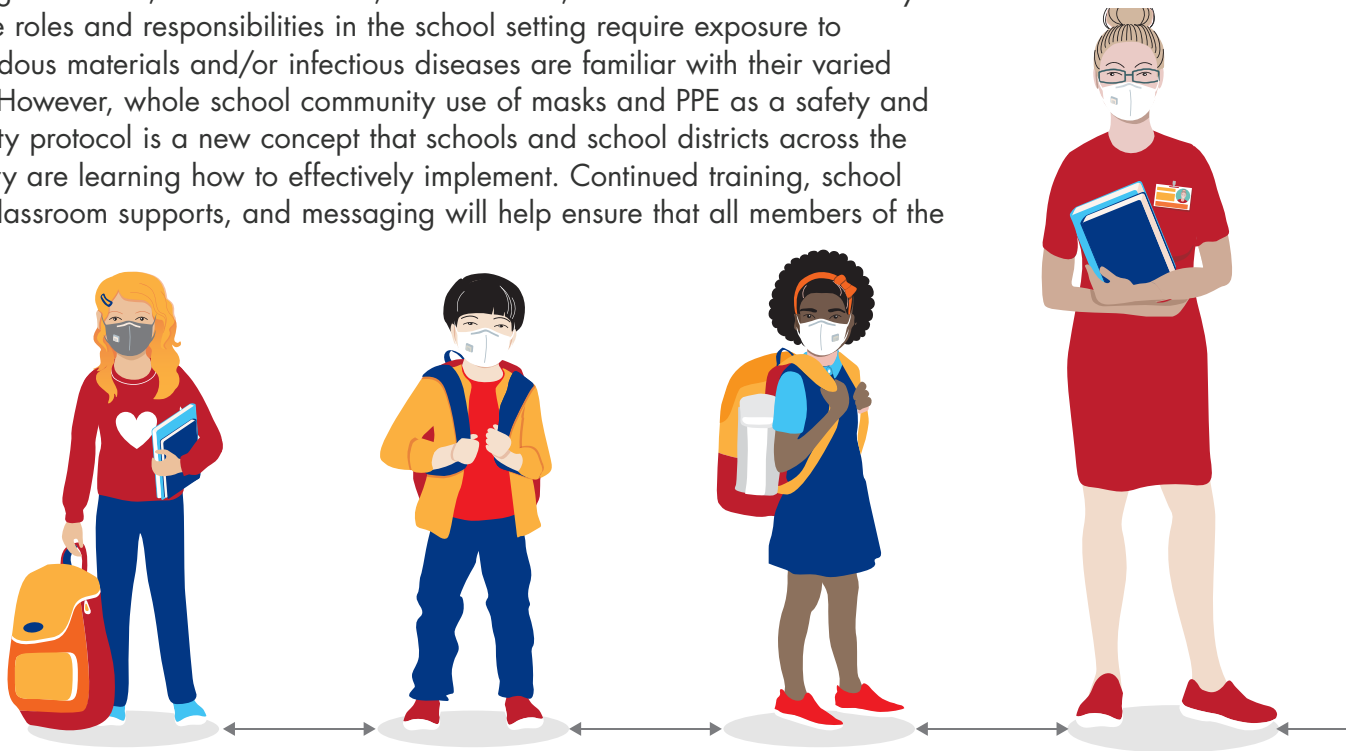
Consider the number of masks and amount of PPE each role within the school will need and whether different individuals require specific types or amounts of PPE based on their roles and responsibilities. It is also important to think carefully about how protocols around use of masks and PPE will be enhanced to help ensure that they provide for the whole school community, including those with access and functional needs. Some schools have opted to implement age-based requirements specific to the use of masks in the classroom (e.g., masks required for only students over the age of 4) as well as flexibilities for those with special healthcare or educational needs (e.g., those with breathing problems, sensory issues, mental health needs, vision impairment). Access more information on the use of masks in the school setting via the [CDC's Guidance for K-12 School Administrators on the Use of Masks in Schools Web page](#).

## Confirm state requirements and recommendations.

State emergency management agencies are key partners in helping schools and school districts determine whether any additional state requirements or recommendations have been shared specifically for schools and/or other public agencies. State and local departments of labor, workplace safety, and/or health may also be key sources of informational support with this topic. Use the Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) Technical Assistance (TA) Center's [State Map of Emergency Management Resources](#) to access contact information for your state emergency management partners.

## Training Students, Faculty, and Staff on Proper Mask and PPE Usage

The use of masks and PPE in the school setting is not a novel concept. Facilities management staff, science teachers, school nurses, and other staff and faculty whose roles and responsibilities in the school setting require exposure to hazardous materials and/or infectious diseases are familiar with their varied uses. However, whole school community use of masks and PPE as a safety and security protocol is a new concept that schools and school districts across the country are learning how to effectively implement. Continued training, school and classroom supports, and messaging will help ensure that all members of the



school community, including students, faculty, staff, visitors, family, caregivers, vendors, and community partners, understand proper use of and protocols around masks and PPE in the school setting. Many schools have integrated the proper use of masks and PPE into their schoolwide and classroom behavior plans.

## Create virtual and in-person trainings on how to properly use masks and PPE gear.

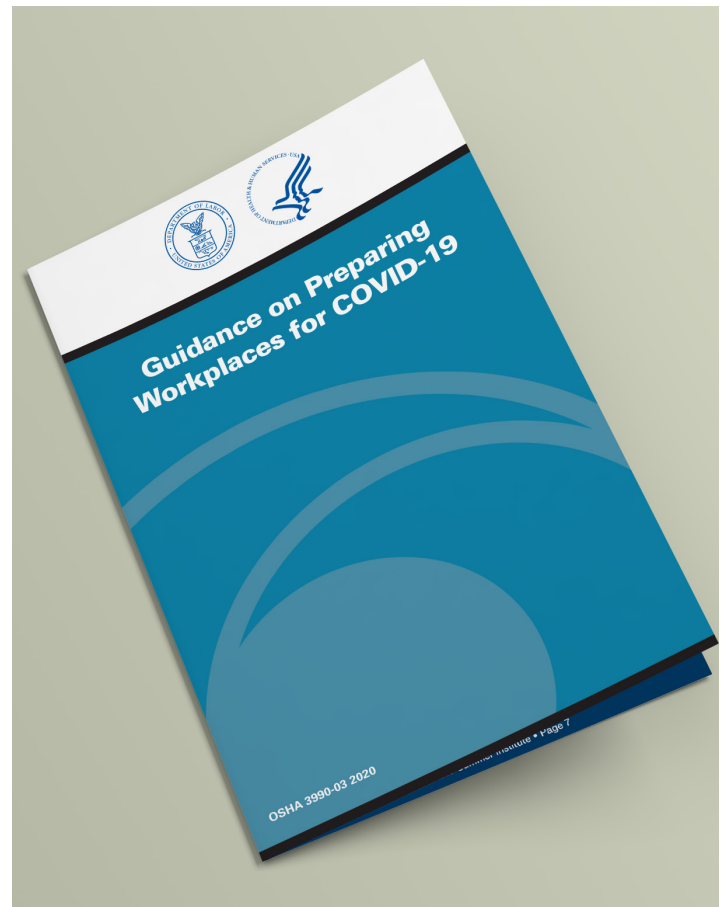
Easy and varied access to training materials on the proper use of masks and PPE is pertinent. Along with virtual and in-person trainings, the REMS TA Center recommends offering repeated learning opportunities at varying times and over an extended period to help ensure access and promote success for all. Education agencies can offer role-based and general training opportunities for students, staff, and the whole school and campus community on how to properly put on, use, and take off masks and PPE gear as well as how to help preserve the supply. To help ensure that families and caregivers also understand new protocols and requirements, education agencies may consider offering take-home training materials and/or online courses that are specifically designed to emphasize the connection between individual at-home safety protocols and

whole school community safety. For example, training materials for families may emphasize the importance of cleaning face masks overnight before students return to school, as well as teaching students how to properly wear and dispose of them after each use. The CDC provides guidelines on proper [use of PPE](#), and OSHA recommends “[providing workers with up-to-date education and training on COVID-19 risk factors and protective behaviors \(e.g., cough etiquette and care of PPE\)](#).” Ensuring the proper fit, use, and disposal of masks and PPE is equally as important as ensuring access and availability.

Proper usage and implementation of education agency and public health protocols are another topic that may come up in conversations about masks and PPE. Education agencies are encouraged to work with their community partners to do the following:

- Create positive messaging and outreach campaigns to help reinforce the use of masks and PPE as positive mitigation and school safety tools.
- Develop training materials in varying formats for students, faculty, staff, families, caregivers, and visitors so that the whole school community understand updated protocols.
- Create ongoing mask and PPE supports such as providing a supply of face masks to students, faculty, and staff who may not have access to them and/or who use public transportation, and customizing the masks to particular groups (e.g., primary school-age children).

For more information on integrating school climate with your school emergency operations plan and school safety, visit the [REMS TA Center Website](#). For more information on building safe school climates, visit the [National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments Website](#). For more information on building schoolwide positive behavior strategies and related interventions and supports using a multitiered approach, see the [National Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports Website](#).



- Integrate protocols around masks and PPE into other efforts, campaigns, and activities designed to help build a positive school climate.

In addition to using the strategies outlined above continually and consistently, it is important to keep in mind that student usage of masks and PPE, in particular, can be strengthened through modeling by every adult in the building. In some school districts, new roles and teams have been created to help schools manage and implement strategies similar to those outlined above. [Addressing the Risk of COVID-19 in Schools While Protecting the Civil Rights of Students](#) offers important considerations for school leaders as they help ensure compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 when creating protocols for the whole school community. The REMS TA Center recommends that school leaders work with their school safety planning teams, human resource departments, legal counsel, the student engagement office, and public health partners if and when creating compliance protocols.

## Develop a mask and PPE self-inspection checklist.

### Facemask Do's and Don'ts

For Healthcare Personnel

#### When putting on a facemask

Clean your hands and put on your facemask so it fully covers your mouth and nose.



DO secure the elastic bands around your ears.



DO secure the ties at the middle of your head and the base of your head.

#### When wearing a facemask, don't do the following:



DON'T wear your facemask under your nose or mouth.



DON'T allow a strap to hang down. DON'T cross the straps.



DON'T touch or adjust your facemask without cleaning your hands before and after.



DON'T wear your facemask on your head.



DON'T wear your facemask around your neck.



DON'T wear your facemask around your arm.

#### When removing a facemask

Clean your hands and remove your facemask touching only the straps or ties.



DO leave the patient care area, then clean your hands with alcohol-based hand sanitizer or soap and water.



DO remove your facemask touching ONLY the straps or ties, throw it away\*, and clean your hands again.

\*If implementing limited-reuse: Facemasks should be carefully folded so that the outer surface is held inward and against itself to reduce contact with the outer surface during storage. Folded facemasks can be stored between uses in a clean, sealable paper bag or breathable container.

Additional information is available about how to safely put on and remove personal protective equipment, including facemasks: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/using-ppe.html>.



© 2/18/2020 8:00:11 AM

[cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus)

As facility managers and school leaders prepare for the full reopening of schools, it is recommended that site assessments be updated to help ensure that masks and PPE are properly stored, stockpiled, tracked, and accessible. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) offers a [PPE self-inspection checklist](#) that schools can use or mirror as they conduct site assessments and do inventories throughout the year. We also recommend that when education agencies conduct site assessments, they first download and use the [REMS TA Center's SITE ASSESS mobile app](#), which equips practitioners with information and knowledge about fundamental site assessment topics, allows users to add locality- and state-specific questions (including details specific to masks and PPE), and exports site assessment data for data aggregation/analysis and recordkeeping. School leaders may also consider a re-review of the list of key personnel required to participate in trainings specific to site assessment and facility management topics to help ensure that contingency plans are in place and that all necessary staff understand how to properly inspect mask and PPE supplies and other aspects of mask and PPE usage.

## Addressing Issues With Mask and PPE Access and Shortages

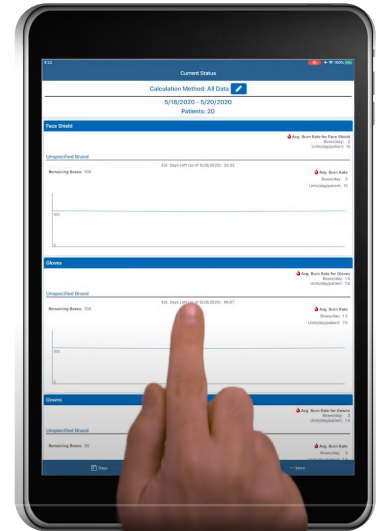
Education agency leaders are very familiar with the process required to locate and secure the physical resources needed to help ensure successful and seamless school operations. Resource lists and requests from local education agencies (LEAs) to state education agencies (SEAs) for support look very different this year as masks and PPE become new priority items for the whole school community. Access to and shortages of masks and PPE are challenges that some LEAs, SEAs, and individual schools may face as the academic year starts and progresses. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) created a fact sheet on [addressing PPE needs in non-healthcare setting](#) that includes acquiring PPE during shortages. FEMA recommends that agencies ask the following key questions before seeking support with addressing PPE shortages:

- Have you implemented all possible PPE use reduction strategies?
- Have you sought regulatory relief or implemented approved alternatives?
- Is the PPE needed considered "scarce or threatened medical supplies"?
- Have you properly defined the need?

The action steps on the next page can also support education agencies as they explore how to respond to challenges and create solutions around mask and PPE access, availability, and shortages.

## Review the CDC PPE Burn Rate Calculator.

Access and availability are common concerns as education agencies prepare to stockpile the needed masks and PPE to protect the whole school community during the school year. Many funding programs require that agencies calculate the “burn rate,” which defines the average rate of PPE consumption over a specific period of time. CDC created the [PPE Burn Rate Calculator](#) to help agencies plan for the use of PPE during the COVID-19 pandemic. This spreadsheet-based model was designed for healthcare facilities but may also be useful for non-healthcare facilities. CDC also offers [strategies to optimize the supply of PPE and equipment](#) for healthcare professionals. Some of those strategies include understanding the PPE burn rate, inventory, and supply chain, and remaining in constant communication with local public health partners (e.g., healthcare coalitions, public health departments, emergency management agencies) to access and identify additional resources that may be available for support.



## Ask local, state, and regional partners for support.

Local, regional, and state education, public health, labor, and emergency management agency partners will have the most up-to-date information on how LEAs and schools can obtain support with addressing shortages. Federal programs and funding requirements are constantly shifting; therefore, it is important to work with those who have the latest information that is applicable to your state. In the event that state agencies are not able to support schools and LEAs with mask and PPE access, there are additional options. For example, the state can submit a request for support to its [FEMA Regional Response Coordinator](#). FEMA also recommends that all requests to local, state, or Federal agencies for “urgent resupply of PPE” include details on the impacts of the shortage and the duration of its impact, along with details on the following:

- Type
- Quantity (include 30-, 60-, and 90-day demand)
- Required locations of PPE usage
- Estimated time until shortage impacts operations (based on burn rate calculations)

Other community partners provide support for addressing issues with access and shortages, including private sector suppliers, volunteer organizations, public service agencies, and other partners with whom the school has developed relationships to access additional resource support for other purposes and during other community-wide emergencies.



## Additional Resources

Find additional agency-specific resources on this topic below for additional support.

### U.S. Department of Education

---

- [CARES Act Emergency Relief](#)
- [COVID-19 Resources for Schools, Students, and Families](#)
- [REMS TA Center COVID-19 Web page](#)

### U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

---

- [CDC Schools and Child Care Programs Web Section](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions About Personal Protective Equipment](#)
- [Guidance for K–12 School Administrators on the Use of Masks in Schools](#)
- [Infographic: Sequence for Putting on PPE](#)
- [NIOSH PPE Tracker App](#)
- [PPE Preservation Planning Toolkit](#)
- [Respiratory Protection vs. Source Control — What’s the Difference?](#)
- [Using Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\)](#)

### U.S. Department of Homeland Security

---

- [Addressing PPE Needs in Non-Healthcare Setting](#)
- [FEMA Public Assistance \(PA\) Program](#)
- [State-by-State PPE Data](#)

### U.S. Department of Labor

---

- [Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19](#)

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

 (855) 781-REMS (7367)  [info@remstacenter.org](mailto:info@remstacenter.org)  [@remstacenter](https://twitter.com/remstacenter)  <https://rems.ed.gov>

