

July 16, 2020

Updated MUS Healthy Fall 2020 Planning Guidelines: Face Covering Requirements

The following update is pursuant to the July 8, 2020 recommendation of the MUS Healthy Fall 2020 Task Force. As soon as possible, but no later than August 1, 2020 – in accordance with the guidelines, exceptions, and accommodations outlined below – all campuses of the Montana University System (MUS) will articulate and implement practices and protocols requiring students, employees, and visitors to wear a face covering while on MUS campus properties and leased facilities.

Campuses will articulate practices and protocols that require face coverings in all indoor spaces (with some notable exceptions listed below), and all enclosed or partially enclosed outdoor spaces. Face coverings will be required in all outdoor spaces where social distancing is not possible or difficult to reliably maintain. In outdoor settings where social distancing is possible, face coverings continue to be strongly recommended. Campus requirements will apply to all MUS students and employees, and all visitors including service providers, contractors, vendors, suppliers, families, and community members.

Campus face covering requirements will supplement measures such as social distancing, frequent handwashing, and frequent cleaning of office, work, and living spaces, already outlined in the June 1, 2020 release of the MUS Healthy Fall 2020 Planning Guidelines that were provided to campuses to follow as they developed their individual campus plans (<https://mus.edu/coronavirus/MUS-Healthy-Fall-2020-Planning-Guidelines.pdf>).

CDC guidance suggests that face coverings may help reduce the spread of COVID-19 when they are widely used in public settings (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>). Face coverings help prevent people who are unaware they have the virus and are either asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic from unknowingly spreading it to others.

What Counts as a Face Covering?

Appropriate face coverings are those that cover the mouth and nose of the wearer. Following CDC guidance, effective face coverings include simple cloth masks, scarves, buffs, or bandanas.

Based on CDC guidance, the most effective face coverings should:

- fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face;
- securely stay in place, covering the nose and mouth;
- include multiple layers of fabric;
- allow for breathing without restriction; and
- be able to be laundered and machine-dried without damaging them or changing their shape.

While not ideal, disposable, single use paper masks are also acceptable when another face covering option is not available. Unless in healthcare or other specialized settings, N95 or surgical masks should not be used as they are critical supplies and should be reserved for healthcare workers and other first responders.

While plastic face shields are not considered a face covering under the guidelines outlined above, face shields may be used in instances where an individual can consistently and reliably maintain appropriate

social distancing and where the University has expressly approved the use of the face shield instead of a cloth mask. Such instances may include, but not be limited to, ADA and other medical accommodations. If an individual is approved to use a plastic face shield, the shield should cover from above the eyes to below the chin to reduce the risk of the spread of respiratory particles.

Exceptions

Campuses will articulate practices and protocols that allow students, employees, and visitors to be exempt from face covering requirements in the following circumstances:

- when alone in an office, enclosed study area, or other space where permitted by official notice;
- when in campus residence hall rooms or apartments; however, face coverings are still required in common areas such as hallways and when visiting other rooms;
- when eating or drinking in a situation where social distancing is practiced;
- when working outdoors or spending time outdoors (e.g. walking, exercising) and at least a six-foot distance can be consistently and reliably maintained;
- in instances or spaces (such as welding labs, nursing labs, etc.) in which other requirements for personal protective equipment (PPE) make it either impractical or unsafe to wear an additional face covering;
- when alone in a vehicle or utility vehicle used for MUS business; however, face coverings are required in vehicles used for MUS business when there is more than one person inside the vehicle; and
- when an accommodation is necessary as indicated by a medical or similar subject matter expert and granted by express written permission of the University.

In accordance with CDC guidelines, children under the age of two, those who cannot physically remove a face covering without assistance, or those who have requested and received a necessary accommodation are not required to wear face coverings.

Accommodations

Furthermore, campuses will articulate practices and protocols that allow for individuals with circumstances that require an exception to the face covering requirement – as indicated by a medical or similar subject matter professional – to request one from the University. To request an exception, employees should contact their campus human resources department. Campuses should direct students seeking an accommodation to contact the campus student affairs office and/or the campus disability resource center.

Accountability

Each campus will articulate accountability practices and protocols for students and employees to follow in reporting and responding to non-compliance in classrooms and other learning, work, and campus spaces. Campus accountability practices and protocols should emphasize the importance of communication and promote ample opportunities for compliance. In the event of willful non-compliance, campuses should articulate practices and protocols that are aligned with existing student conduct and classroom management policies and guidelines. Students, employees, and visitors engaging in sustained, willful non-compliance may be directed to leave campus spaces, taken off duty, and in certain cases subject to disciplinary action.

Campus practices and protocols should articulate for employees how to report and respond to non-compliance in classroom settings and other learning, work, and campus environments. Specific practices and protocols can be tailored to each campus but must meet the following objectives:

1. Clearly communicate the face covering requirement and accountability practices and protocols to students and employees so they are applied consistently to all classroom, learning, work, and other environments across campus. (e.g. consistent language addressing the face covering requirement should appear on all course syllabi).
2. Clarify existing, relevant campus policies and the extent to which they allow classroom instructors to manage their classroom learning environment by directing non-compliant students to leave the classroom and, if necessary, to end a particular class meeting in response to a disruptive or aggressive student.
3. Outline graduated accountability measures that match the intensity of non-compliance. For example, isolated, unintentional instances of non-compliance (e.g. a student forgetting to bring a face covering to class) should be met with an opportunity to comply (e.g. reminding the student of the requirement and providing a single use face covering). On the other hand, repeated, willful non-compliance (e.g. a student who refuses to wear a face covering in a classroom setting, even after multiple requests and being offered a free face covering) can be addressed more directly (e.g. directing the student to leave the classroom space or ending the class meeting if the student refuses to leave). Repeated, willful non-compliance should be reported to the appropriate department/division head and may lead to disciplinary action.

For instances of non-compliance that are not covered by existing or new policies, practices, and protocols on accountability in the classroom and other learning settings, employees should share any concerns about non-compliance with their immediate supervisor or department/division head and students should share any concerns about non-compliance with a campus student affairs officer.

Employee and Student Awareness

Prior to the start of the Fall 2020 semester, each institution must develop and implement a training strategy for all employees that ensures they have a clear understanding of their campus' face covering requirement and accountability practices and protocols. In addition, students should be made aware of the ways in which the face covering requirement will be enforced by employees prior to the start of the Fall 2020 semester.