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Sent: Thursday, November 5, 2020 7:29 AM
To: Marchese, Nina (DESE) <Nina.M.Marchese@mass.gov>
Cc: DOE-DL - Approved Special Education Team <OASES@doe.mass.edu>
Subject: Clarification on Governor's order regarding masks



Dear Executive Directors of Collaboratives and Leaders of Approved Special Education Schools,

Associate Commissioner Helene Bettencourt requested that I share this information with you in response to questions DESE received yesterday.

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) has received questions about Governor Baker's [Revised Order Requiring Face Coverings in Public Places](#), COVID-19 Order No. 55, issued on November 2, 2020. In particular, school districts are asking whether and how this Executive Order – which generally requires all persons over the age of 5 years old to wear a mask or cloth face covering when in a public location – applies to schools. In response, DESE provides the following information:

- The Executive Order provides a few exceptions based on sector-specific COVID-19 safety rules, including rules issued by DESE. As a result, **public school districts, collaboratives, and approved special education schools in Massachusetts should continue to follow DESE's requirements on masks, as set forth in the [Initial Fall School Reopening Guidance](#) on June 25, 2020.** Specifically,
 - Students in grade 2 and above are required to wear a mask/face covering that covers their nose and mouth.
 - Students in kindergarten and grade 1 should be encouraged to wear a mask/face covering.
 - Adults, including educators and staff, are required to wear masks/face coverings.
 - Exceptions to mask/face covering requirements must be made for those for whom it is not possible due to medical conditions, disability impact, or other health or safety factors.
 - Mask breaks should occur throughout the day. Breaks should occur when students can be six feet apart and ideally outside or at least with the windows open.
 - Masks/face coverings must be worn by everyone on the bus during school bus transportation.

Please see the [Initial Fall School Reopening Guidance](#) for more details.

- Consistent with the Executive Order, **if a student who is participating in in-person learning is unable to wear a mask or face covering because of a medical or disabling condition, the school may require documentation to verify the condition.** Similarly, the school may require documentation from an employee or other worker who is required to wear a face covering and requests an accommodation due to a medical or disabling condition.

Thank you,

--Nina

Nina M. Marchese, M.Ed.

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