

August 17, 2020

Dear Physician Colleagues:

Due to the risk of SARS-CoV-2 transmission from asymptomatic and pre-symptomatic individuals, the OKAAP and the OAFP COVID Task Force supports and promotes mask wearing for children and youth in accordance with the current CDC guidance. The CDC recommends the use of non-medical grade cloth face coverings in public settings where other physical distancing measures are difficult to maintain. Using a non-medical grade mask will not decrease all risk of viral transmission, but when used with other risk mitigating efforts, masks can further reduce the transmission of SARS-CoV-2 in public areas and a school building. **For schools, the Task Force has recommended a state-wide requirement for masks to be worn indoors for teachers and for students in K-12th grades.**

Masks are considered safe for most children and youth and there are very few exceptions for wearing masks. Some children may not feel comfortable wearing certain types of masks, so fortunately there are several options for appropriate face coverings. It is important that each person find a style that is the most comfortable for them to wear to improve compliance. Additionally, children are more likely to respond positively and effectively wear a mask if they can have some control in the process. Consider encouraging children to select their own mask or decorate their mask with their favorite character. Parents can help normalize masking by practicing at home, showing their children pictures of other children with masks on, role modeling and explaining the reasons for masking as developmentally appropriate.

OKAAP and OAFP Task Force asks that primary care physicians and medical professionals in Oklahoma also work to support and promote masking for adults and children. Rather than writing mask exemptions, please advise youth and their parents on how to increase comfort on wearing masks.

The following list includes exemptions for mask wearing:

- **Children < 2 years of age**
- **Any child who is asleep, incapacitated, unconscious, or not breathing**
- **Child with sensory processing disorder who is unable to wear a mask without excessive trauma or frequent manipulation**
- **Children with behavioral health diagnoses or development delays that prevent them from wearing a mask without frequent manipulation**

We thank you for your commitment and support to help keep our communities as safe as possible as our state reopens schools.

Sincerely,
Oklahoma Chapter American Academy of Pediatrics
Oklahoma Academy of Family Physicians