



STATE OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
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GRETCHEN WHITMER  
GOVERNOR

MICHAEL F. RICE, Ph.D.  
STATE SUPERINTENDENT

**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** October 5, 2020

**TO:** Local and Intermediate School District Superintendents  
Public School Academy Directors

**FROM:** Michael F. Rice, Ph.D., State Superintendent 

**SUBJECT:** MDHHS Directive to Wear Masks - MEMO #COVID-19-121

A little more than an hour ago, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Director Robert Gordon issued [Emergency Order](#) under MCL 333.2253 to restrict gathering sizes and to require face coverings in public spaces, including schools.

The order follows the Michigan Supreme Court decision on Friday, October 2, 2020 that invalidated COVID-19-related executive orders. Today's order relies on authorities that were first enacted after the Flu of 1918, and that were not at issue in the Michigan Supreme Court's decision.

Under MCL 333.2253, if the MDHHS director determines that control of an epidemic is necessary to protect the public health, the director may prohibit by emergency order the gathering of people for any purpose and may establish procedures to be followed during the epidemic to ensure continuation of essential public health services and enforcement of health laws.

Effective immediately until October 30, 2020, the order created requirements to wear masks at indoor and outdoor gatherings. The order requires individuals to wear masks when in gatherings, defined as any occurrence where persons from multiple households are present in a shared space in a group of two or more, and requires businesses and government offices to enforce those requirements for gatherings on their premises. The order also requires the wearing of masks at schools, except for in Michigan Economic Recovery Council Region 6.

DHHS has said it will issue further orders regarding school districts reporting positive results of COVID-19 tests.

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According to experts in infectious diseases and epidemiology, masks are critical to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) states, "Wearing a mask helps to protect others in your community."

The CDC notes the following as ways to reduce the likelihood of contracting coronavirus:

- Wash your hands often
- Avoid close contact: Maintain 6 feet of distance between yourself and others outside of your household
- Cover your mouth and nose with a mask when around others
- Cover coughs and sneezes
- Clean and disinfect
- Monitor your health daily

When people wear masks, they help protect all those around them. The CDC writes, "The mask is meant to protect other people in case you are infected."

The better we do with our mitigation strategies, the longer we will be able to keep schools open and have children attend school in person. To go without masks is to risk the health of our friends, family, and school staff.

Thank you for your attention to this critically important issue.

cc: Michigan Education Alliance  
Confederation of Michigan Tribal Education Directors