

Hudson Valley Community College
COVID-19 Face Mask and Glove Use Protocols
Revision Date: June 19, 2020

Introduction

The use of face masks is an essential and effective safety measure in the Hudson Valley Community College COVID-19 Re-Occupancy Safety Plan. While face masks alone may not prevent the wearer from becoming infected with the virus that causes COVID-19, they may help prevent the spread from people who are unaware they are infected. Face masks are most effective when used in combination with other controls such as social distancing. It is expected that all employees, students, visitors and contractors will be courteous and respectful of each other's health and wear masks or face coverings as required. These protocols provide the college's requirements for the effective use of face masks and other coverings.

These protocols also provide guidance on the voluntary use of gloves. Although disposable gloves are not considered a required control for most college employees and students, it is understood that individuals may desire to wear them as an added layer of protection. When doing so, it is important to use them in a way to not increase the risk to oneself and others.

These protocols do not supersede personal protective equipment requirements currently in effect for higher-risk COVID-19 exposures or for other chemical and physical exposures. These protocols are in effect until further notice and subject to change as additional guidance becomes available.

Face Masks

Face masks covering the nose and mouth are required to be worn by employees, students, visitors and contractors over the age of two years old at all times while occupying common or shared campus spaces. These spaces include, but are not limited to, college-owned or leased properties; college-owned or leased vehicles; private vehicles when used for college business; and any other location where college business is conducted. Face masks may be removed when working alone in a workspace (i.e. office, cubicle with walls at least five feet high, vehicle, shop, lab, classroom or mechanical space); when eating or drinking; or when more than six feet away from others in an outdoor setting. Face masks are required to be worn in common spaces such as lobbies, hallways, elevators, fitness rooms, break rooms, office suites, restrooms and kitchens, even when no one else is present.

The college will provide cloth or surgical-style face masks to all employees. Employees may choose to provide their own cloth or surgical-style mask or other cloth covering that covers the mouth and nose. Students, visitors and contractors are encouraged to provide their own masks. A limited supply of masks will be available for students through student services offices and for visitors and contractors through Public Safety or their campus host. A limited supply of face masks with a clear window are also available through the Center for Access and Assistive Technology. Masks with exhalation valves are not permitted to be worn unless covered with a face mask due to the potential for the wearer to expose others to smaller droplets containing the virus.

If a student or employee is not able to wear a face mask or cloth covering for medical reasons, they should notify their supervisor or instructor and the Center for Access and Assistive Technology. No additional documentation is required. As supplies permit, the student or employee will be issued a face shield that will be required to be worn whenever a mask would be required. Visitors and contractors who are not medically able to wear a mask will be asked to use a face shield.

The college will only provide N95 masks for protection against COVID-19 to certain individuals (i.e. Health Services medical staff, Public Safety EMTs) performing higher-risk tasks who have received training, fit testing and medical clearance in accordance with the OSHA-compliant respiratory protection program administered by the EHS department.

It is important to emphasize that avoiding exposure and maintaining social distancing is critical to slowing the spread of COVID-19, even when wearing a face mask or covering. Face masks or coverings are not intended to be used as a primary control measure when other measures are feasible. Face masks or coverings are intended to be used as a last resort when close contact cannot be avoided or as a supplement to other controls.

When wearing face mask or other covering, individuals should:

- Make sure that they fit snugly and cover the nose and mouth
- Avoid touching the front surface, as it is the most contaminated part. Try to handle by the straps only.
- Store in a clean, dry place when not in use
- Wash cloth face masks frequently, especially when soiled or wet
- Replace disposable surgical-style face masks when torn, dirty or wet
- Do not become complacent with other protective measures:
 - Do not touch the mask or face
 - Continue to be vigilant with thorough and frequent handwashing
 - Practice respiratory etiquette and cover coughs and sneezes
 - Frequently disinfect high-touch surfaces and shared equipment
 - Practice social distancing – even when wearing masks

Gloves

Disposable nitrile or latex gloves are not typically required or recommended for protection against the virus that causes COVID-19 unless in direct contact with individuals who may be sick. In most other situations, frequent disinfection of surfaces and handwashing is at least as protective as the use of gloves, since the virus is not transmitted through the skin. Gloves may offer some protection when handling shared objects; however, it is often more effective to change the way of working to avoid contact or to disinfect the object before and after use. If disposable gloves are used on a voluntary basis, care should be taken to avoid inadvertent exposure or spreading of contamination:

- Hands should be washed before putting on gloves
- Touching the face or uncontaminated surfaces should be avoided while wearing gloves
- Gloves should be changed or disinfected with hand sanitizer after coming into contact with a potentially contaminated surface
- Gloves should be disposed of in the trash and hands cleaned after removing

When removing gloves, it is important to avoid touching bare skin with the contaminated outside of the gloves.

Gloves will be provided by the college for voluntary use as supplies permit. Available supplies will be prioritized for distribution to departments with documented personal protective equipment assessments requiring their use for chemical exposures or higher-risk COVID-19 exposures.