

Memorandum

To: All Visitors to County Facilities **Date:** May 26, 2021

From: Mark Schwartz, County Manager DocuSigned by:
Mark Schwartz
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Subject: Policy Requiring Face Coverings for Visitors in County Facilities

As we consider the next steps in safe practices during the COVID-19 pandemic, we continue to encourage the use of online services and virtual meetings for the general public and County staff to safely access County services. Virtual meetings and online systems have demonstrated an ability to increase the reach of Arlington County's services and continue to prove effective for our residents to conduct County related business. Based on the successes to date with vaccination in Arlington County and the continued decline of both hospitalizations and cases of COVID-19 in Arlington County and the greater region, and after consultation with the County's Public Health Division Chief, we have concluded that common sense changes to the policies surrounding face coverings are possible. Face coverings prevent the person wearing the mask from spreading respiratory droplets when talking, sneezing, or coughing. They proved an effective tool during the pandemic and we continue to emphasize the need for unvaccinated individuals to wear a face covering. Since people may spread the virus before symptoms start, or even if people never have symptoms, wearing a face covering also protects others around you.

As additional information becomes available on best practices and scientific data, this guidance may be amended as appropriate.

This policy provides guidance to help visitors and the general public understand when they are required to wear face coverings. County management reserves the right to determine whether any specific face covering meets the requirements outlined in this policy. NOTE: Regulations surrounding face coverings for County employees is governed by separate County policy.

Purpose

This policy provides guidance to visitors to County facilities regarding the use of face coverings when indoors while visiting County owned, leased, and controlled facilities (hereafter referred to as County Facilities) on County owned, leased, and controlled property (hereafter referred to as County Property).

Scope

All visitors or members of the public, aged five and over, when entering County Facilities on County Property.

Definitions

Face Covering: A covering fitted over the mouth and nose for the effect of inhibiting transmission of respiratory particles. A face covering under this policy may be a reusable cloth face covering or a commercially available, disposable face covering.

Cloth Face Covering: Refers to any cloth/fabric covering for the face, for the purpose of covering the mouth and nose completely and with the effect of inhibiting transmission of respiratory particles. Cloth Face coverings shall:

- Fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face;
- Be tied or otherwise secured to prevent slipping without being held in place by your hands;
- Fully cover the mouth and nose;
- If using a folded bandana or scarf, include multiple layers of fabric;
- Allow for breathing without restriction; and
- Be able to be laundered and machine-dried without damage or change to shape.

This term is not intended to indicate any medical or otherwise graded face covering.

Coronavirus: the novel coronavirus, which causes COVID-19.

Physical Distancing: The practice or ability to keep a safe distance from other people in public places during the outbreak of a contagious disease in order to minimize exposure and reduce the transmission of coronavirus. Current coronavirus recommendations are to keep at least six feet from one another.

Intended Use

Face coverings are used to keep a person from potentially transferring respiratory droplets to others. Proper physical distancing, handwashing, refraining from touching one's face, and wearing face coverings, taken together, have been shown to be effective in slowing the spread of coronavirus.

Face coverings are not intended to replace the consistent practice of physical distancing or personal hygiene habits such as frequent hand washing and avoiding touching one's face.

Visitors in County Facilities

While indoors, if unable to maintain a minimum of six feet of physical distance to other individuals, all individuals aged five and older are required to wear a face covering. It is recommended that children ages 2–5 do the same. Departments may at their discretion provide single use face coverings to visitors to facilitate provision of services.

If indoors and in spaces where physical distancing of 6 feet is possible from other individuals, then face coverings are not required.

CDC and VDH recommendations for masking will be followed in County healthcare settings, congregate settings, and on public transit. In these settings, signage requiring face coverings will be posted in these settings.

Face coverings are not intended to allow visitors who are showing symptoms of an infectious illness, such as the cold, flu, or coronavirus, to visit County Facilities. Visitors who are sick or who suspect they may be sick should stay home.

There may be times when a visitor may remove their face covering temporarily while speaking during the public comment portion of a public meeting, while exercising, or when needed to secure government or medical services, provided the visitor maintains appropriate physical distancing from others as required for that activity.

Accommodations

Visitors shall comply with this policy at all times. Any visitor who cannot use a face covering or for whom wearing a face covering would prohibit individuals with hearing impairments from effectively communicating with them may notify County Staff either in advance of their visit or at the time of the visit that they require an accommodation and ask for an alternative method of service delivery. Requesting accommodations in advance of visits will prevent delays in service delivery.

County Staff will determine whether an alternate method of service delivery is available. If County Staff is unable to promptly provide an alternative method for service delivery, the visitor should contact the appropriate department remotely. Contact information will be made available by County Staff at the County Facility.

Any visitor who declines to wear a face covering because of a medical condition shall not be required to produce or carry medical documentation verifying the stated condition nor shall the person be required to identify the precise underlying medical condition.

Enforcement

County Staff working at each facility, along with security guards when available, will enforce the visitor policy on face coverings. County Staff shall deny entry to any visitors who fail to comply with this policy. Visitors not wearing face masks in accordance with this policy will be asked to leave County Facilities. If a visitor refuses to comply with this policy after being requested to do so or to leave the County Facilities, the police may be requested to provide assistance.

cc: County Board
Reuben Varghese, Public Health Division Chief
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