

# One Size Never Fits All

Respiratory Protection for COVID-19

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# Is there a difference between a respirator and a mask?

Respirators are designed to reduce the wearer's respiratory exposure to airborne contaminants such as particles, gases, or vapors.

- Respirators and filters must be **selected based on the hazards** present.
- They come in various sizes and styles and should be **individually selected to fit the wearer's face** and to provide a tight seal.
- A proper seal between the user's face and the respirator **forces inhaled air to be pulled through the respirator's filter material**, thereby providing protection.



# Cal-OSHA requires that employers assess and identify respiratory risks to determine PPE needs

- The **recommendations** included in this presentation are based on SDCOE's assessment of the risks present in our worksites
- Each **district and school must make its own assessment** and determinations based on the risks in its worksites
- **SDCOE does not establish policy or requirements** for any schools in the county other than those operated by SDCOE

# What should school administrators know about respiratory protection requirements?

## Requirements for the Safe Use of N-95 Respirators

1. Each site (school and/or facility) must have a **written respiratory program** and a **designated program administrator**.
2. Each employee who will use a respirator must receive **medical clearance**.
3. Each employee who will use a respirator must receive **training** on how to properly use, store, and care for the respirator(s).
4. Each employee must be **properly fitted (fit tested)** for the respirator that they will be using.

## What PPE should staff wear when working with students who cannot wear face covers?



Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) must be provided to employees that is **matched to the risks that are present in the environment** they're required to work in.

- When physical distancing can be maintained, and ventilation is good, wear a **face cover and a face shield in combination.**
- SDCOE employees will use an **N-95 respirator** when:
  1. Working attending to people who have symptoms (greatest risk)
  2. Work is required within 6-feet for more than a brief interaction.



## What precautions should staff take when their work with others requires their mouth to be seen for communication needs?

- Ensure the room is **well ventilated**.
  - Use the largest room available
  - Maximize the use of outdoor spaces
- Use a **face cover with a clear panel**.
  - A face shield with a fabric drape is permissible but offers less protection
  - When using a face shield, wear a face cover as well and remove it only when needed for communication
- Maintain **physical distancing**.  
For SDCOE employees:
  - **Brief work within six feet** is permissible but should be as **infrequent and as distanced as possible**
  - If work within 6-feet is required for more than a brief interaction, SDCOE employees will use an **N-95 respirator**



## What precautions should be taken by staff conducting assessments that require them to be within 6-feet for more than 15 minutes?

SDCOE employees will be required to use an **N-95 respirator** when it is not possible to maintain physical distancing for more than brief interactions.

If the assessor's face/mouth must be visible for communication during the assessment, a second staff member who is equipped with an N-95 respirator may be needed to assist the examiner.

- The staff member wearing the N-95 provides direct supervision of the student.
- The assessor handles communication.
- Variations for assessment:
  - Maintain physical distance and wear a face cover with a clear panel or face shield with a fabric drape
  - If the assessors face must be closer than 6-feet, consider using having the assessor's face on a video screen
  - Consider conducting the assessment using adjoining rooms that allow the assessment to be conducted using a window to separate the assessor and subject

## Are assessors allowed to say they are unable to do some assessments because of this without getting into legal trouble?

- There are too **many variables** to give a precise answer on this.
- For assessments to be valid, they must be conducted within the **parameters established for each tool** that is used.
- Consider **alternatives that maintain the integrity** of the evaluation.
- Follow the advice of your **special education department or SELPA.**



## Can a teacher or specialist pull students from two different cohorts to do small groups?

- This isn't prohibited in the industry guidance. But it's not encouraged either. Here's what it says:
  - *To reduce possibilities for infection, **students must remain in the same space and in cohorts as small and consistent as practicable**, including for recess and lunch. Keep the same students and teacher or staff with each group, to the greatest extent practicable.*
  - **Minimize movement of students and teachers or staff as much as practicable.** *For example, consider ways to keep teachers with one group of students for the whole day. In secondary schools or in situations where students have individualized schedules, plan for ways to reduce mixing among cohorts and to minimize contact.*
- If it is necessary to regroup students...
  - Maintain physical distancing
  - Use face covers (if appropriate)
  - Outside is safe than inside
  - Teach, model, and reinforce good hygiene practices
  - Disinfect spaces before use by a new group of students

**I have a student who has a structural abnormality of his ears and misshaped head and cannot wear a face mask because it will not stay on his head. He will probably have a medical exemption. What do I do?**

- If the student has an **IEP or 504 plan**, the accommodation and alternatives should be **considered by the student's team**.
- If the student does not have a 504 Plan or IEP, **consider a convening a team** to determine if the student qualifies for the support of a 504 Accommodation Plan.
- **Accommodations** could include:
  - Type of face cover
  - Hat-mounted face shields
  - Structural changes within the classroom environment could include one or more of the following:
    - Use of plexiglass barriers
    - Placing an air cleaner near the student
    - Seating the student based on optimal ventilation
    - Increased distance between the student and others

## Students with medical needs are protected under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Be careful about decisions that could constitute unlawful discrimination.

- The assertion that a child is medically exempt from using a face cover may place a **school on notice** that the child may have a disability that impacts a major life function (such as breathing).
- Schools are obligated to locate children (**child find**) who are eligible and provide these protections... Parents are not required to ask.
- **Be cautious** about decisions to exclude students from in-person settings because they cannot wear a face cover.

# Questions?

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