

COVID TOOLKIT: EMPLOYEE FACE MASK ACCOUNTABILITY

Introduction

Ball State University will continue to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic in a manner that promotes the safety of employees, students, and campus visitors, while furthering the University's mission and values. Ball State's policies and plans will also be aligned with guidance from government agencies, public health officials, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

This document outlines the policy, protocols, and suggested guidance regarding face mask accountability for employees. Adherence to and accountability of the face mask policy is the responsibility of all members in our community. By holding oneself and those over which they have influence accountable, we help maintain a healthy learning and working environment for all.

Our protocols will also reflect several other benefits of being vaccinated for COVID-19. Specifically, fully vaccinated students and employees:

- Will not be required to quarantine if they are identified as a close contact of someone who has tested positive; and
- Will not be required to engage in physical distancing.

University Face Mask Policy

From the [Return to Campus Policy for Employees](#)

i. Requirements

All persons on campus who are not vaccinated—including faculty, staff, students, vendors, contractors, suppliers, and visitors—are required to wear face masks while inside campus buildings, including in classrooms and laboratories. Face masks are also specifically required in the following situations:

1. When necessary to comply with any applicable governmental face mask orders;
2. When outdoors and in the presence of others if physical distancing is difficult to maintain;
3. When using campus transportation (such as a shuttle bus);
4. When multiple individuals are in a University vehicle; and
5. When it is determined by an employee's supervisor that wearing a mask is necessary for specific job duties. Environmental Health and Safety will determine if particular types of face masks are required for particular job settings, and this will be communicated through supervisors.

Face masks should be worn so that they cover the individual's nose and mouth, and the type of mask should be consistent with [CDC guidance](#). This means the face mask should help prevent respiratory droplets from traveling into the air and onto other people when the person wearing the face mask coughs, sneezes, talks, or raises their voice. As examples, face

masks that are crocheted or beaded would not be considered sufficient for purposes of this policy.

ii. Exceptions

There are certain situations where a face mask is not required to be worn while on campus, as follows:

1. When [fully vaccinated](#);
2. When alone in a private office or work space;
3. When working behind a plexiglass barrier and physical distancing from others can be maintained. This would include, for example, a faculty member teaching behind a plexiglass barrier in a classroom or laboratory setting;
4. When a student is in their own room in their residence hall;
5. When actively engaged in eating/drinking in an indoor or outdoor space;
6. When an individual has a health condition related to the wearing of a face mask and an accommodation has been granted (see the “Accommodations” section below); and
7. When an exception has been granted by the Dean or Provost, or area Vice President. Situations where exceptions may be granted include, but are not necessarily limited to, academic settings where mask wearing is not practicable (e.g., applied music lessons) and while participating in particular activities through Recreation Services.

iii. Accommodations

If an individual has a health condition related to the wearing of a face mask, University Human Resource Services should be contacted, or, in the case of a student, the Office of Disability Services. When such an issue is raised, an individualized assessment will occur to determine if an exception to this face mask policy will be granted as an accommodation.

iv. Non-Compliance

Supervisors are not expected to access their employees’ vaccination status. However, if a supervisor is aware that an employee is unvaccinated and the employee declines to wear a face mask as required, the supervisor is responsible for addressing it with the employee. Employees should refrain from addressing non-compliance or perceived non-compliance directly with other employees, and should instead report issues to their supervisors.

If a student makes you aware of their unvaccinated status and declines to wear a face mask as required, the student should be referred to the Office of the Dean of Students. If the situation occurs in a classroom or other academic setting, it is considered a classroom management issue, and the faculty member should remind the student of the requirement and give the student a chance to comply with it prior to referring the matter to the Office of the Dean of Students.

Guidance for mask accountability begins on page seven of this document.

The University Police Department (UPD) is not responsible for enforcing face mask requirements and should not be contacted regarding such issues.

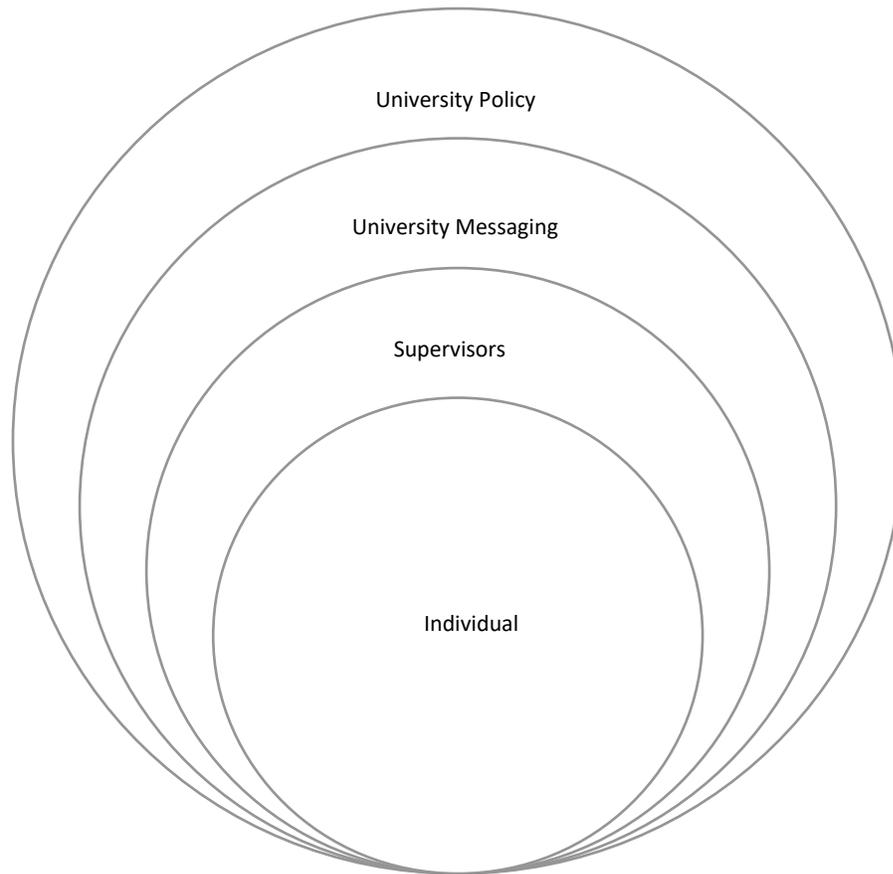
v. Other Guidance on Face Masks

Proper use and care of face masks are the responsibility of the individual. For additional guidance on the use and care of face masks, visit the [CDC Website](#) and [World Health Organization \(WHO\) Website](#).

Consistent with CDC guidance, the University does not consider face shields to be an adequate substitute for face masks due to the possibility that droplets could travel under or to the side of the shield if the wearer coughs or sneezes. As such, a face shield may only be utilized when used in conjunction with a face mask or as an approved exception to the face mask policy (such as, for example, a faculty member wearing a face shield in lieu of a face mask when a student in the class relies on lip-reading).

Framework for Education and Adherence

The university has created a multi-level approach to educate the community about the importance of adhering to and holding each other accountable to the face mask policy.



- INDIVIDUALS are asked to take the Cardinals Care Pledge, pledging to care for themselves, other Cardinals, our campus, and community.
- SUPERVISORS should set clear expectations of accountability by creating consistent messaging, practices, and addressing non-compliance if they become aware of it.
- UNIVERSITY MESSAGING and signage will set the tone throughout campus reminding community members of the importance of these safety practices.
- UNIVERSITY POLICY will set a clear and consistent policy for the safety of the Cardinal community.

Supervisor Response to Employee Noncompliance

Employees who need accommodations with regard to the mask requirement on campus should contact the ADA and Leave Administration Programs Coordinator in University Human Resources Services, 765-285-1036. To help ensure medical privacy, the supervisor of an employee who is unable to wear a mask for medical reasons should contact by the ADA Program Coordinator or their proxy regarding reasonable accommodations for that employee.

1. Should an employee not have a medical reason to exempt them from compliance with the Face Mask Policy, the supervisor may:
 - Have a conversation with the employee to understand “why” they are not following the policy
 - Ensure the employee understands the policy. Share a copy/link/quote.
 - Reinforce that compliance is the socially responsible thing to do and in line with the Beneficence Pledge and the Cardinal Pledge the guides our campus culture that all community members support
 - Reinforce that per OSHA an employer must set reasonable safety rules to maintain a safe work place
 - Remind them that unless an employee has a medical/personal safety reason the rule cannot be followed, they must follow reasonable employer policies
 - Remind them that we are expected to follow the reasonable safety rules in spite of personal opinions
 - Guide employees who express a medical reason for non-compliance to contact Human Resources to seek ADA accommodation and protect their privacy by limiting your knowledge of their medical details
 - Work with your next level supervisor and/or Employee Relations/Human Resources for advice on addressing the need for additional conversation with the employee who does not respond to prior compliance requests. Non-compliance with regard to mask policy may be escalated to a disciplinary matter. Contact Employee Relations for guidance before issuing discipline.
 - Please note, University Police should not be called regarding face mask compliance.
2. Once the conversation has concluded, the supervisor should send the employee an email summarizing the conversation and restating the expectations for compliance with the Face Mask Policy, and the consequences for not complying with this directive [see template(s)].
3. Should the behavior be repeated (employee is not properly wearing a face mask), repeat steps 1 and 2, and copy the next level supervisor on the 2nd issuance of the email who will also have a follow-up conversation/email contact with the employee to reinforce the expectation articulated by their supervisor.

4. If there is a 3rd instance of non-compliance, the supervisor(s) should work with Employee Relations to discuss appropriate next steps (ADA review, escalation to VP, additional education, disciplinary action, etc.).

Recommended Templates

Policy reminder Text for Supervisors to educate employees.

To protect the health and safety of the Ball State University community, Ball State University requires that employees who are not fully vaccinated wear face masks over their mouths and noses while inside campus buildings, including in classrooms and laboratories, with very limited exceptions. Face masks are required outside when 6-foot social distancing cannot be maintained at all times for employees who are not fully vaccinated. If you are unable to wear a face mask and unable to be vaccinated, please contact ADA and Leave Administration Programs Coordinator in University Human Resources Services, 765-285-1036 to request an accommodation. Additional detail may be found in the full [Employee Return to Campus plan](#).

First Noncompliance Email Template from Supervisor:

Dear _____,

As we discussed earlier today, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, Ball State University has adopted protocols to promote the safety of our community, which include wearing a face mask while at work if you are not fully vaccinated. Today it appeared you were not in compliance with the face mask policy: (describe scenario). When we met to better understand if there were any extenuating circumstance that led to your inability to comply, you indicated (summarize employee response). Please know that you are expected to comply with this policy when you are at work. If for some reason you are unable or unwilling to comply with the face mask policy, I encourage you to contact me to better understand your options moving forward. I want you to be successful, but for the safety of our community, future failure to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary action.

Sincerely,
Supervisor

Second Noncompliance Email Template from Supervisor:

Dear _____,

As we have previously discussed, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, Ball State University has adopted protocols to promote the safety of our community, which include wearing a face mask while at work if you are not fully vaccinated. Today there was another situation where it appears you may not have been in compliance with the face mask policy: (describe scenario). When we met to better understand if there were any extenuating circumstance that led to your inability to comply, you indicated (summarize

employee response). Please know that you are expected to comply with this policy when you are at work. If for some reason you are unable or unwilling to comply with the face mask policy, I encourage you to contact me to better understand your options moving forward. I want you to be successful, but for the safety of our community, future failure to comply with this policy will result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

Sincerely,
Supervisor

Employee Response to Other Employee or Student Employee Noncompliance

- Employees with accommodations from the ADA and Leave Administration Programs Coordinator in University Human Resources Services will be encouraged to communicate with colleagues in advance about their accommodations as they relate to the face mask policy to avoid disclosing any private matters in public.
- Remind and educate employees about the policy.
- An employee should not confront another employee, student, or visitor about perceived face mask non-compliance, remind the person of the policy and positively reinforce compliance.
- Employees should bring non-compliance concerns to supervisor of employee to address the matter.
- Please note, University Police should not be called regarding face mask compliance.
- Continued non-compliance will result in disciplinary action and/or be recorded in the employee's personnel file.

Additional Guidance

- Face mask accountability should not be a conflict. If an employee is not in compliance and becomes confrontational, simply disengage and report the incident to your next level supervisor or Employee Relations, if applicable.
- Start with "Why" to humanize the issue. Instead of only stating the policy, if you feel comfortable, explain why this policy matters to you. For example, you might share that you or someone you care about is considered as an increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19, and you expect those around you to take the necessary steps to keep you and others safe. Alternately, you may say that we have members in our community, who are at an increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19.
- Inform employees of where they can get replacement face masks if they forget or lose their face mask. Employees may purchase face masks from the Ball State Bookstore in the Art and Journalism Building. There will be a limited number of disposable masks made available in college administrative offices for urgent use.
- Repeat expectations and guidelines early and often.
- Please note, if you have concerns about your faculty or staff colleagues, those concerns should be directed to unit heads or college Deans.