

August 11, 2020

Dear School Board President,

As schools prepare for the fall 2020 school year, the North Dakota Medical Association (NDMA) strongly recommends school districts require educators, staff and students to follow guidelines released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) related to two critical issues: wearing face coverings and following youth sporting activities guiding principles.

On July 14, 2020, the CDC issued a guideline recommending that Americans wear face coverings to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. In that statement, the CDC affirmed that face coverings are a critical tool in the fight against COVID-19 that could reduce the spread of the disease when used universally within communities.

The CDC guideline for face coverings is based on two recent studies. One study, published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*, concluded that adherence to universal masking policies reduced SARS-CoV-2 transmission within a Boston hospital system, and the second, published in the CDC's *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)*, showed that wearing a face covering prevented the spread of infection from two hair stylists to their customers in Missouri.

In agreement with CDC guidelines, NDMA believes that everyone should wear a face covering when leaving their homes, regardless of having symptoms of COVID-19, with the exception of young children under the age of 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the face covering without assistance.

Face coverings may prevent people who have COVID-19 from spreading the virus. It's important to know that since people may spread the virus before symptoms start, or for those who have the virus but show no symptoms, wearing a face covering may protect others.

If everyone were to wear a face covering when out in public the risk of exposure to COVID-19 can be reduced for the community.

Additional CDC guidelines to prevent the spread of COVID-19 include:

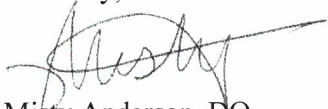
- Staying home as much as possible;
- Practicing social distancing by remaining at least 6 feet away from others; and
- Washing hands often.

NDMA strongly recommends that as boards are considering their plans for the 2020-21 school year, they follow CDC guidelines and require face coverings for educators, staff, and students when in schools. If you require further medical advice, please contact our office and we will connect you with a physician that can give you detailed advice.

Schools should also follow CDC guidelines for keeping youth athletes safe. The more people a child or coach interacts with, the closer the physical interaction, the more sharing of equipment there is by multiple players, and the longer that interaction, the higher the risk of COVID-19 spread. Therefore, risk of COVID-19 spread can be different, depending on the type of activity.

NDMA believes that by following CDC guidelines schools can protect the health of educators, staff and students who will be in classrooms and on the field together with others. We strongly recommend that boards adopt this same position.

Sincerely,



Misty Anderson, DO  
NDMA President

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