

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:  
MARCH 7 CHANGES TO THE POLICY ON FACE COVERINGS AND ON VACCINATION OR TESTING**

**FACE COVERINGS**

**Q: Will masks be optional in most state agencies?**

A: Yes. Based on improving trends with COVID-19, masks will become optional in most state agencies and facilities beginning March 7.

**Q: When do these changes go into effect?**

A: They become effective at 12:01 a.m. Monday, March 7. Until then, face coverings continue to be required at Cabinet agency facilities.

**Q: The policy says that agency heads may require face coverings in settings that they determine to be high-risk, including but not limited to “long term care facilities, correctional facilities, homeless shelters, and health care facilities.” Are those the only places where agency heads can require face coverings?**

A: No. Agency heads have the discretion to require face coverings in other situations that they determine are high-risk in the context of agency-specific business operations. Agencies will announce any additional situations where face coverings will be required.

**Q: How will I know if my agency head, in his or her discretion, determines that workers at some or all of my agency’s workplaces must continue to wear face coverings when working onsite?**

A: An agency head or designee will send an email to all employees or post notice in the workplace to instruct workers any areas where face coverings will be required when working on-site.

**Q: Must I wear a face covering if working alone in my office or another workspace?**

A: Any face covering requirements under the Cabinet agency policy do not apply if the worker is alone in a room, or if another face covering exception applies. Even in these situations, face coverings may be required in some circumstances by other federal, state, or local authorities, such as health practices required by the U.S. Centers for Medicaid & Medicare Services (CMS).

**Q: Can people continue to voluntarily wear face coverings in the workplace?**

A: Yes. People can wear Face Coverings in agency facilities and employees should continue to feel welcome to do so, even if face coverings are not required. Unvaccinated employees are strongly encouraged to wear face coverings, even in situations where face coverings are not required, because they are at higher risk to experience severe illness and infect others.

**Q: If I am up-to-date on my COVID-19 vaccines and if I work in a situation where my agency head has required face coverings, can I choose to not wear a face covering?**

A: No. In the high-risk situations identified by the agency head (including but not limited to long term care facilities, correctional facilities, homeless shelters, and health care facilities) all people must wear face coverings regardless of vaccination status.

**Q: Do these changes apply to non-Cabinet agencies?**

A: This policy and changes to it apply to Cabinet agencies as well as any non-Cabinet agencies that have specifically chosen to participate in the policy.

**Q: Do these changes apply to guests at state facilities?**

A: Guests at state facilities should follow posted signs. Agency heads may continue to require face coverings in higher-risk situations, including but not limited to long term care facilities, correctional facilities, homeless shelters, and health care facilities.

### **VACCINATION-OR-TESTING REQUIREMENTS**

**Q: Do I still need to participate in weekly testing for COVID-19 if I am not fully vaccinated?**

A: Yes. Workers covered by this policy must provide a timely test result – i.e., within the last seven days (168 hours) before the beginning of the worker’s shift.

**Q: If I was on vacation or other approved leave during the seven days before I report to work, will I be in violation of this policy?**

A: No. A worker who has been on leave, on vacation, or who has had days off will not be in violation of this policy if, upon return to the work site, the worker has a negative test result from a test taken within the previous seven days.

**Q: If I receive a positive COVID-19 test result, must I stay home? If I am not symptomatic, is it OK to report to work as usual?**

A: Workers who test positive for COVID-19 must observe an isolation period in any situation required under [current CDC or DHHS recommendations](#). As of the date this FAQ was prepared (February 28, 2022), the CDC indicates that people who test positive should isolate even if they do not have symptoms.

**Q: What if I get a false positive COVID-19 test result AND I’m asymptomatic?**

A: If a positive rapid antigen test is followed up by a negative PCR test within a 24 to 48-hour period, and if the worker does not have any symptoms of COVID-19, a worker can conclude that the rapid test was a false positive. In this situation, there would not be a need to isolate.

**Q: For proof of testing, must I get tested at a site that provide laboratory results, or is the result of an at-home rapid COVID-19 antigen test adequate?**

A: Effective 12:01 a.m. March 7, workers generally may meet the testing requirements of this Policy by completing at-home rapid COVID-19 antigen tests. (Agencies may continue to require

PCR tests if required by the federal government or in high-risk situations. Your agency will contact you if PCR tests from a laboratory will continue to be required.)

**Q: If I am using an at-home rapid COVID-19 antigen test, what should I provide as proof of testing?**

A: A worker may submit a smartphone photo of the test result, or the worker may provide some other reasonable proof of the test result suggested by the agency’s Human Resources Office.

**Q: If my agency provides onsite testing, must I use that option?**

A: Follow any direction from your agency. If your agency hasn’t told you otherwise, you have the option to use the onsite testing location, another testing location, or an at-home rapid COVID-19 antigen test to provide proof of timely testing.

**Q: If I get my test at an offsite testing location or use an at-home rapid COVID-19 antigen test, will I still be compensated for time needed to get the required test?**

A: Because at-home rapid COVID-19 tests are allowed under this Policy, and because some agencies have on-site testing programs, it should rarely be the case that employees take substantial amounts of time to get tested under this Policy. Employees subject to the Fair Labor Standards Act (“FLSA-subject” employees, commonly called hourly employees), can list as “Time Worked” the actual time spent getting tested for the weekly required test.

**Q: Must I provide a negative COVID-19 test result to return to my agency workplace?**

A: Once someone has contracted COVID-19, he or she may continue to test positive for many weeks afterwards. Therefore, once someone tests positive for COVID-19 and completes the isolation period, he or she does not need to be tested again under this policy for 90 days after the first positive test. However, if someone receives an initial positive test that is later confirmed to be a false positive, this 90-day exemption from testing does not apply.

**Q: Do I need to use my own leave time if I must isolate or quarantine due to COVID-19 illness or exposure?**

A: Until the end of the COVID-19 State of Emergency, employees who must isolate or quarantine due to COVID-19 have access to up to 80 hours of paid leave. This time should be entered as CDE-Administrative Leave.

This leave is available to employees who have not already used the full 80 hours of leave, which was originally provided at the beginning of the COVID-19 State of Emergency in March 2020. Employees may also use sick leave or any other approved leave. Employees may contact their agency Human Resources Office to learn if other options may be available.