

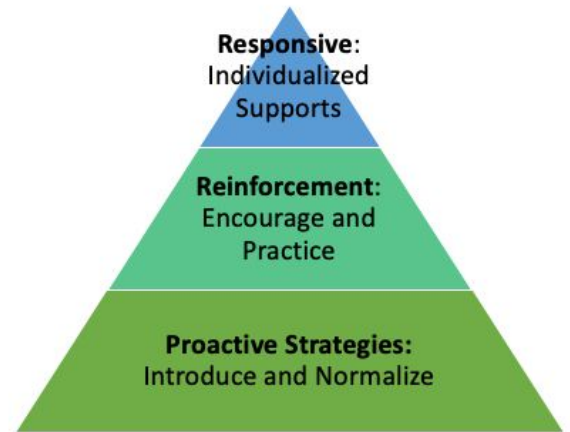
Positive Behavior Planning for Young Children Wearing Face Coverings

As with any behavior changes in early childhood, children and families should be supported in a positive and developmentally appropriate way to change their behavior regarding face coverings in their program environment. This situation should be approached with empathy, patience, and consistency. Young children learn in the context of relationships. Partnering with families will help children be successful. Keep in mind, behavior change takes time, this behavior planning process for face-coverings that should be pursued for at least 1 month before you consider moving a child to fully remote learning.

Overview

As outlined in the [Statement on Positive Behavior Guidance](#), effective and appropriate behavior change in early childhood should be positive and based on a tiered model of support. Getting children to wear face coverings is no different!

All children should receive Proactive (Tier 1) and Reinforcement (Tier 2) supports for desired behaviors. If a child is still learning to wear their face covering, you should engage in observations to better understand the antecedent preventing their use. Based on that information, you can provide additional individualized Reinforcement and Responsive (Tier 3) supports.



Developmental Progression for Face Coverings

Young children develop at their own unique pace, and using face coverings is no different. The progression below shows the steps a child may go through as they become comfortable wearing a face covering. This progression is flexible: children may start at different places, take different lengths of time to move from one milestone to another, go back and forth, and even skip some milestones. Each milestone is a sign of progress and an opportunity for celebration!

1	2	3	4
Child is comfortable around others wearing face coverings	Child shows interest in face coverings	Child holds face covering in hands	Child places face covering on face for several seconds
5	6	7	8
Child wears face covering for up to 5 minutes at a time	Child wears face covering with frequent reminders to wear and/or take a break from it	Child wears face covering with infrequent reminders to wear and/or take a break from it	Child independently puts on face covering and appropriately takes breaks from face covering when needed

Tier 1 Proactive Strategies: Introduce and Normalize Face Coverings

Provide all children the following supports in large or small group settings to help them understand expectations, see expectations modeled, and have the opportunity to practice them.

- **Introduce Face Coverings and why they are important**
 - Use a Social Story to help everyone understand how face coverings keep us safe and healthy (protecting others, especially the most vulnerable in our city). Social stories can be found in English [here](#) and in Spanish [here](#), watching this simple [video](#), or creating one yourself explaining why people are wearing face coverings/masks. If age appropriate, ask the children to help you write a story about face covering/face covering wearing.
 - Model wearing a face covering yourself, including how you put it on and safely store your face covering when you need a break from wearing the face covering
 - Consider adding it to the Classroom Agreements chart
- **Give children time to explore and practice wearing a face covering throughout day**
 - Let them look in the mirror and at each other

- Have them practice putting face coverings on dolls as you introduce them
- Provide face coverings in class centers to include in play (i.e. dolls in dramatic play)
- **Make face coverings fun!**
 - Sing songs and use games to teach them about wearing a face covering
 - Work with child to personalize their face covering through class art project or having the family provide a preferred face covering
 - If the family is amenable, take a picture of the child, laminate the picture, and allow the student to carry it with them or attach it to their shirt as a transitional object to help them feel safe and seen.

Tier 2 Reinforcement: Encourage and Practice Wearing Face Coverings

After introducing and normalizing face coverings throughout the day, reinforce proper use and provide additional opportunities for children to practice wearing their face coverings in small or large groups.

- Positive Narration and reinforcement, praise
 - When you see children wearing their face coverings or appropriately taking a break from it, let them know! Narrate what you see them doing appropriately and thank them for keeping the classroom safe. I.e. *"I noticed you put your face covering on after you blew your nose and then washed your hands! Thanks for being thoughtful and keeping us all safe."*
- Play games in large or small group to reinforce wearing face coverings. Here are two ideas from Community Playthings:
 - Play Simon Says. Use prompts like "face coverings on lap", "Hands on head", "face coverings on face", "Toe on Knee" etc.. and have children copy your motions.
 - Play the Humming Game. With everyone wearing a face covering, secretly select one child to hum. Have the other children guess who is humming.
- Provide opportunities for choice, such as allowing children to choose between different types of face coverings.
- Work with family to reinforce face coverings by giving them strategies for introducing and getting used to them at home. See this [guidance for families](#) for more ideas.

Tier 3 Responsive Strategies: Provide Targeted and Individualized Support for Student and Family

If a child is not making progress in wearing their face covering after ample time and opportunities to engage in proactive and reinforcing strategies, provide individualized strategies responsive to the child's specific needs. All behavior has meaning. Understanding what a child is trying to gain or avoid with their behavior will help you meet that need while wearing their face covering. To best meet the needs of an individual child:

- **Gain more information**
 - Work with the family to better understand factors that might be contributing to a child's discomfort wearing a face covering
 - Observe the child's behavior related to face coverings to determine what the function of the behavior might be (what might be motivating the behavior?).
 - [Simple ABC Behavior Observation Guide and template](#)
 - [Functions of Behavior Overview](#)
- **Create an individualized plan**
 - Continue to provide proactive and reinforcement strategies for the child as listed above.
 - Based on the determined function of behavior, create a plan tailored to the child:
 - Consider what kind of [reinforcements or rewards](#) would help the child get what they want or need while wearing their face covering. This could include social, activity, or material rewards. For example,
 - If observation indicates a child takes off their face covering when a teacher shifts their attention to another child the function may be gaining attention, you may practice Active Ignoring during the behavior. Then offer the social reward of 1:1 teacher time if they wear their face covering throughout large group time.
 - If observation indicates a child takes off their face covering when it is time for music and movement, the function may be to avoid the discomfort during physical activity. You may offer

the child an alternative activity, offer them special instrument to play ("If you wear your face covering and keep everyone safe, you can play the tambourine for us!"), or provide a visual that shows how to ask for a break.

- Individualized Social Stories featuring the child, their preferred activities/ items, and triggers. See this resource on [How to write Social Stories.](#)
- Ensure the child has ample opportunity for explicit social emotional learning, especially self regulation skills like using the cozy corner, asking for breaks, using visuals to identify their emotions, etc...

Partnering with Families

All families should be aware of the expectation that children wear face coverings, why it is important, and how they can support their child in becoming comfortable with face coverings. Please share this letter with families so they have background information and strategies to use with their child: [Guidance for Families: Introducing Face Coverings to Young Children.](#)

- **Difficult Conversations**

Find out why a family does not want their child wearing a face covering. One way to help a family change their habit is through humble inquiry and empathy with their situation. It is important to meet people where they are, understand what is getting in the way of them adopting the protective health behaviors that we want to support, and then try to mitigate those barriers.

- If the families' refusal stems from an ideological stance, remember shaming will not work. Avoid lecturing them with facts about the health benefits of face coverings. These kinds of facts are not useful in a debate over ideologies. Use an empathetic stance to discover why the family does not wish to wear the face covering. Maybe they see it as a sign of weakness, or maybe their social circles are unaccepting of this practice. There may be room for reframing the conversation away from protecting their child's health to helping keep other children safe.
- If it is about face covering comfort, let families know their child will have opportunities for face covering breaks during the day. Or if the face covering causes irritation, suggest some solutions like more breathable materials, adjustable strings for the ears, etc.
- If it is about the families' struggle to get their child to wear a face covering, offer tips for how to achieve face covering wearing as a habit (see examples listed above). Other examples include: involve your child in creating the face covering, and if possible, let them choose the material or let them decorate their face covering. Or, wear a face covering that matches your child's face covering. Read a story or tell an oral story about children wearing face coverings, and have your child draw a picture of themselves wearing one.
- If it is about a lack of enough face coverings, or the inability to wash them regularly, offer resources for where families can find extra free face coverings, or consider bringing these resources to your program for families in need.
- If it's about something else, offer a group conversation over video for families where they can share their apprehensions, and hear solutions from their peers.