

NYCHA Face Covering FAQ For Employees

SUPERVISORS: Please post copies of this advisory prominently in employee common areas. Thank you!

The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (“DOHMH”) recommends that all New Yorkers wear a face covering when outside of their home to help stop the spread of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). See the [DOHMH FAQ on Face Coverings](#). Additionally, per Executive Order 202.16, effective April 15, 2020, and DCAS Commissioner Directive 2020-1, all essential employees present in the workplace must wear a face covering that covers the mouth and nose when in direct contact with members of the public. “Direct contact” refers to whenever there is a potential for you to be within six feet or less of any other person, including another staff member or a member of the public, including residents. Based on these directives, NYCHA is issuing face coverings to its employees.

Employees must continue to practice social (physical) distancing and good hand hygiene even when wearing a face covering — including keeping 6 feet of distance between themselves and others whenever possible. A face covering is one more precaution we can take that may help stop the spread of COVID-19.

Which NYCHA employees are required to wear Face Coverings?

All NYCHA employees conducting work in NYCHA developments and Central office locations where staff may come into direct contact with any other staff member or members of the public, including residents, must wear a face covering. This includes apartments, public spaces, management office waiting areas, and outdoor areas such as building entrances, playgrounds, seating areas, and pathways. This requirement also applies in any business location – offices, maintenance offices, unoccupied apartments where you may be performing work – where there is the potential for staff members to be within six feet or less of another staff member.

What is the difference between these face coverings and respirators (e.g., N-95s)?

The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (“DOHMH”) and the Centers for Disease Control (“CDC”) continue to discourage the use of respirators such as N-95s or N-100s by non-healthcare workers. These are critical supplies that must continue to be reserved for healthcare workers and other medical first responders. These respirators will not be issued to NYCHA staff to meet the face covering requirement.

For non-healthcare workers, DOHMH and CDC recommend the use of cloth face coverings, or non-medical grade paper face coverings. Recommended face coverings include anything that covers your nose and mouth, including dust masks, scarves, and bandanas.

Will a face covering protect me from being exposed to Covid-19 in the workplace?

A face covering, by itself, is not intended to protect the wearer, but it is an additional precaution that you can take to help prevent the spread of the virus, especially from people who are infected but may not have symptoms. Wearing a face covering does not replace practicing social distancing, frequent hand washing, and other everyday preventive actions. When wearing a face covering, the physical distance of 6-ft (social distancing) should be maintained when possible.

Will NYCHA provide me with a face covering?

NYCHA is issuing face coverings to all employees conducting work in NYCHA developments and Central Office locations, where staff may come into direct contact with other staff members or members of the public, including residents. NYCHA is providing surgical masks/dust masks (as long as supplies are available) to be used as a face covering for personnel entering apartments to conduct work described in the Work Order Guidance.

Can employees wear their own face coverings?

Yes, employees may elect to use their own face covering. However, if you use your own cloth face covering, it must meet [CDC's criteria](#): 1) fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face 2) be secured with ties or ear loops 3) include multiple layers of fabric 4) allow for breathing without restriction 5) be able to be laundered and machine-dried without damage or change to shape. The DOHMH recommends daily laundering of cloth face coverings. The CDC has provided instructions, including [video tutorials for making cloth face coverings](#).

If you elect to wear your own face covering it must securely cover your nose and mouth and must be worn in accordance with NYCHA's policy, i.e., - it must be worn whenever staff may come into direct contact with any other staff member or members of the public, including residents. All face coverings must be workplace-appropriate and cannot feature offensive images or content.

What if an employee is unable to wear a face covering for medical reasons?

Individuals with respiratory impairments such as Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) or other chronic lung diseases, may be adversely affected by use of a face covering. These employees should provide medical documentation and complete [NYCHA form 015.208, Reasonable Accommodation Request – Human Resources](#), and submit it to his or her supervisor. Supervisors should assign employees who cannot wear face coverings to tasks that do not place them in direct contact with residents or members of the public or other staff members. It is important to note that individuals with underlying respiratory conditions are also at a higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

What if an employee refuses to wear a face covering for religious reasons?

Employees who are seeking an exemption from the face covering policy for religious reasons must complete [NYCHA form 015.208, Reasonable Accommodation Request – Human Resources](#), and submit it to his or her supervisor. This allows NYCHA to determine if there are possible alternatives that may be put in place to allow them to follow health and safety requirements without violating their religious practices.

What precautions should employees follow when wearing a face covering?

Employees must continue to practice social (physical) distancing and good hand hygiene even when wearing a face covering — including keeping 6 feet of distance between themselves and others whenever possible. A face covering is one more precaution we can take that may help stop the spread of COVID-19.

- Face coverings should fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face. They must securely cover your nose and mouth.
- Face covering should be secured with ties or ear loops.
- When putting on and taking off a face covering, as much as possible, avoid touching your face. Always wash your hands or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer before putting on or taking off face coverings, and immediately after removal. Wash your hands for 20 seconds with soap and water or, if not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Do not share your face covering with others.
- Do not put a used face covering in places where others can touch it or where germs trapped in your face covering can touch other surfaces, such as tables, desks, countertops.
- Used paper masks should be thrown out at the end of the day.
- Do not throw your face covering loosely in a bag or backpack. It is recommended to keep a plastic bag with you to store your face covering if you will be taking it off during the day.

