

Forest Hills School District



September 13, 2021

Dear Rangers,

Since the recent [mandatory mask order](#) was put into place, school districts such as Forest Hills have received numerous requests for clarification of the Order and have also received inquiries regarding long-term parental exemptions. Late last week the Pennsylvania Department of Education provided clarification to all Pennsylvania School Districts regarding this issue and associated non-compliance measures.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education informed all Pennsylvania School Districts on Friday, September 10, 2021 that,

“This Order is not a mask optional policy. Any school entity simply permitting a parent’s sign-off without evidence that the student has a medical or mental health condition or disability that precludes the wearing of a face covering is not in compliance with the Order. Under the Order, and as set forth in [PDE’s Answers to FAQs](#), school entities must require all individuals, two years of age and older, to wear face coverings unless the individual has a medical or mental health condition or disability that precludes the wearing of a face covering. In accordance with Section 3 of the Order, before an individual is excepted from the Order, all alternatives to a face covering, including a face shield, are to be exhausted. It is recommended that any exception be in accordance with eligibility under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act or IDEA for such medical or mental health condition or disability. School entities should follow their established processes for determining student eligibility under those laws, including any medical documentation that they would normally require. **There are exceptions to the Order; however, a parent’s opposition to the Order is not one of them.**”

Currently, the Forest Hills School District’s policies and procedures surrounding the mask Order are consistent with this information.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education also made all Pennsylvania School Districts aware that, “On Wednesday, [PDE issued a communication to a school district](#) that has exhibited significant noncompliance with the Acting Secretary of Health’s Face Coverings Order. While this letter responds to a specific set of circumstances in a single school entity, the cautions and conditions are broadly applicable to all school entities – both public and nonpublic.”

This information provided by the Pennsylvania Department of Education has removed any notion that compliance with the current mask Order is simply a local decision for local individuals to decide. Pennsylvania School Districts are required to adhere to the Order. If you or your child are seeking an exemption to the mask Order, please contact your child’s Principal to provide them with the acceptable medical excuse as described. Additionally, if you feel a face shield may be a better option for your child, make arrangements for your child to wear an approved/optional face shield. If one is not available, please contact the district so we can assist in providing one to you or your child.

Thank you for your patience and understanding as we work through this together. Stay healthy and safe Forest Hills.