



DSHS Guidance for Youth Camps Regarding Face Coverings for Staff and Campers

On July 2, 2020, Governor Abbott issued Executive Order No. GA-29 relating to the use of face coverings during the COVID- 19 disaster. The order requires that “every person in Texas shall wear a face covering over the nose and mouth when inside a commercial entity or other building or space open to the public, or when in an outdoor public space, wherever it is not feasible to maintain six feet of social distancing from another person not in the same household. . . .” The order then goes on to enumerate clarifications and exceptions.

The DSHS Youth Camp Program has subsequently received several questions regarding whether and how the order applies to staff and campers at DSHS-licensed Youth Camps in Texas.

Youth Camps should consult with local officials, local health departments, and their counsel to determine whether Executive Order. NO. GA-29 applies.

While Youth Camps are not “open to the public,” Youth Camps that are “commercial entities” are subject, to the provisions of the order for “every person” to “wear a face covering over the nose and mouth.”

In addition, the program interprets “same household” to apply to persons who live together **and not** to staff and campers who are temporarily housed together in cabins or barracks at Youth Camps.

Given that Youth Camps are not typical “commercial entities” in which the persons visit for a temporary period of time and then depart, the DSHS Youth Camp Program considers the Governor’s order applicable to **all staff and campers** with the following exceptions:

- Campers younger than ten years of age are not *required* by the order to wear a face covering. The program nevertheless strongly recommends that Youth Camp staff encourage these younger campers to wear face coverings as much as possible or feasible to prevent infection and mitigate spread of the virus.
- Staff or campers with medical conditions or disabilities that prevent wearing face coverings are not required by the order to wear face coverings. Such

persons should take extra precautions to maintain physical distance of at least six feet from other persons in all situations.

- Staff and campers need not wear face coverings while eating or drinking, including during meal times in dining facilities. The program recommends that face coverings be worn at all times in the dining facility other than during the physical act of eating and drinking.
- Staff and campers who are engaged in outdoor exercise or other physical activity **and** who are able to maintain physical distance of at least six feet from other persons need not wear face coverings **while so engaged**.
- Staff and campers who are engaged in swimming activities are not required to wear face coverings **while so engaged**.
- Staff and campers who are bathing, showering, or engaged in other activities such as washing and brushing teeth are not required to wear face coverings **while so engaged**. Youth camp staff should stagger bathing and restroom time to allow for physical distance to be maintained.
- Staff and campers need not wear face coverings while they are physically in their bunks sleeping. However, they should wear face coverings during all other times that they are with other persons in cabins or other closed spaces.
- Staff and campers who are actively engaged in religious worship services at the camp **are not required but are strongly encouraged** to wear face coverings.
- Staff and campers who are giving a speech to an audience are not required to wear face coverings. It is strongly encouraged that such presenters maintain physical distance of at least six feet from the audience during presentations.

Please note that this guidance and interpretation cannot anticipate every unique situation. Youth camp staff should stay informed and take actions based on common sense and wise judgment that will protect the health staff, campers, and their families.