



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 1, 2021

#### **ASHLAND AND BAYFIELD COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH REAFFIRM ADVISORY REGARDING FACE COVERINGS**

**Chequamegon Bay Region, WI- Effective immediately, Ashland and Bayfield Public Health are issuing an advisory which stipulates that everyone age five and older should wear a face covering or mask when in any enclosed building where other people, except for members of the person's own household or living unit, could be present, and when social distancing of six feet or more cannot be maintained or guaranteed.**

Ashland and Bayfield County Public Health have been consistent with recommending the use of face masks throughout the pandemic. "While vaccinations are underway, it is important to continue to follow masking, social distancing, and hand washing recommendations as we are starting to see variants in our region and want to prevent a surge of COVID-19 cases in our Chequamegon Bay Region," states Sara Wartman, Bayfield County Health Officer. "Now more than ever, it is important that we do not let our guards down. The sooner we reach our goal of vaccinating 80% of our communities, the sooner we will be able to move on," said Liz Szot, Ashland County Health Officer.

Per the advisory, people should wear a face covering that covers their nose and mouth when in public, including in businesses, health care settings, when waiting in line, and on public transportation. The advisory also indicates that individuals are to wear face coverings when in someone else's home when you are not of the same family group. Exceptions are made for certain activities such as eating at a restaurant, but during those activities, six feet distancing from individuals not from the same household or living unit should always be followed. Some people may be exempted if they have a physical, mental, or developmental condition that prevents them from wearing a mask.

If someone is unable to wear a mask or face covering in a business due to a condition or disability, people should ask that business for reasonable accommodation, like curbside pickup or delivery option. Children ages two through four are highly encouraged to wear a mask in public, and children age five and older are advised to wear masks. If your child is not able to wear a mask, then you should only bring them to places where it is necessary, so that your child does not get or spread COVID-19 to others.

People can cover their faces a variety of ways to comply with this advisor:

- **Masks can be either manufactured or homemade.**
- **Masks can be reusable or disposable.**
- **Masks can have inner filter pockets.**
- **Clear masks or cloth masks with a clear plastic panel may be used to facilitate communication with people who are hearing impaired or others who need to see a speaker's mouth to understand speech.**

- **Medical masks and N-95 respirators fulfill the requirements of the advisory.**

The following does **not** meet CDC requirements for mask wearing:

- Masks worn in a way that does not cover both the mouth and nose.
- Face shields or goggles (face shields or goggles may be worn to supplement a mask that meets the above requirements).
- Scarves, ski masks, balaclavas, or bandanas.
- Shirt or sweater collars (e.g., turtleneck collars) pulled up over the nose and mouth.
- Masks made from loosely woven fabric or that are knitted, i.e., fabrics that let light pass through.
- Masks made from materials that are hard to breathe through (such as vinyl, plastic, or leather).
- Masks containing slits, exhalation valves, or punctures.
- Masks that do not fit properly (large gaps, too loose or too tight).

In addition to wearing a mask, these actions will help protect both you and others from COVID-19:

- **Get vaccinated as soon as you can. Makes sure to complete the vaccination series to be considered fully vaccinated.**
- **Stay home if you are sick or feeling off.**
- Stay home if you do not need to go out. Working from home, virtual gatherings, and using curbside or delivery ordering are still the safest and best options to protect yourself and others.
- Regularly wash your hands with soap and water for twenty seconds and/or use hand sanitizer.
- Stay six feet apart from other people. Respiratory droplets are expelled into the air when people cough, sneeze, talk, and breathe. Staying six feet from others will lower the chances of you encountering the virus from those droplets.
- Assume you may have encountered COVID-19 if you go out. Watch for symptoms like fever, cough, shortness of breath, fatigue, body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, and diarrhea. If you have these symptoms, call your doctor to be tested.

**This advisory should not be used as justification to harass or harm another person who is either wearing or not wearing a face covering. Individuals may have disabilities or other conditions that prohibit them from wearing masks.**

Thank you for your commitment to keeping our community safe as we navigate these coming months.

**This advisory remains in effect until further notice.**

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