

Specialized PPE: Who is Getting What and Why

What is specialized PPE?

Specialized PPE includes anything **other than** a reusable cloth mask and/or a disposable surgical mask. Face shields, gloves, gowns, and N95 masks are all types of specialized PPE.

Who is getting specialized PPE?

The District is providing specialized PPE, and [instructions for use](#), to the following:

- Nursing staff
- Individuals supervising medical waiting area
- Some [special educators and related services providers](#)
- Through our vendor TransDev, our bus monitors and bus drivers

The District is not providing specialized PPE to classroom teachers or other staff, in the main. The District is providing regular PPE (reusable and/or disposable face masks) to all staff.

Why do “they” get specialized PPE and “we” don’t?

Boston Public Schools is following all regulatory guidance, and complying with its contractual agreement with the BTU, when determining what type of PPE is provided to its employees.

DESE Guidance

Massachusetts regulatory guidance directs the District as to what type of PPE should be provided to whom. It does so based on what various people need given their job duties. N95s are required when a person is providing clinical care to a student suspected of COVID-19 exposure (including waiting with the student in the isolation room) or caring for students when providing nebulizer treatments, chest PT, suctioning, or trach care. Other than those few circumstances, an N95 mask is not required or even recommended. See [Special Ed Guidance from DESE](#) and [MDPH Comprehensive PPE Guidance](#).

[DESE Guidance for School Health Offices](#) provides as follows:

The CDC recommends that guidance for healthcare providers be followed for [direct service providers](#). Direct service providers include personal care attendants, direct support professionals, paraprofessionals, therapists, related services personnel, assistants, school nurses, health office staff, and any other staff who must come into close contact (6 feet or closer) with students with disabilities.

Direct service providers are essential for the health and well-being of the students they serve. Direct service providers should be aware of and trained on how COVID-19 spreads, risk factors, and prevention actions. When working with students without suspected or confirmed COVID-19, the CDC recommends following [everyday prevention actions](#), such as cloth face coverings, wearing gloves, washing hands frequently, and cleaning and disinfecting surfaces. Regardless of COVID-19 status, additional preventive measures may need to be taken depending on the activity and the risk level of that activity.

“Schools and districts must provide appropriate PPE to all **direct service providers (DSPs)**, as outlined in the chart below. ... All staff must wear face coverings, with the exception of individuals for whom it is not safe to do so due to age, medical condition, or other health or safety considerations. Staff should wear appropriate PPE based on the specific interactions they are having with students (e.g., instruction, behavior support, activities of daily living, etc.)”

To make this language easier to understand, DESE has provided the following chart of PPE guidance.

| Classification of Individual Wearing protective equipment | N95 or KN95 Respirator | Face Shield | Disposable Gowns | Disposable Gloves | Gowns/ Coveralls/ Other Body Covering | Cloth Face Covering | Disposable mask |
|--|------------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------|---|
| DSPs in care areas of students with suspected COVID-19 | X | X | X | X | X | | X (with face shield if N95/KN95 not available) |
| DSPs in the same facility but not in the care areas for students with suspected COVID-19 | | | | | | X | |
| DSPs providing personal care to students without suspected COVID-19 but who may potentially be exposed to bodily fluids | | X (preferred) | | X | | | X |
| DSPs performing or present during aerosol generating procedures such as nebulizer treatments, chest PT, suctioning, trach care | X | X | | X | X | | |
| Transportation personnel/monitors who must come in direct physical contact with passengers (e.g. buckling/unbuckling, performing wheelchair safety services) | | | | X | | X | |

OSHA Guidance

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration also does not require or recommend N95 respirators (masks) for school personnel. OSHA categorizes “those who may have contact with the general public ... in schools” as having a “medium exposure risk.” OSHA recommends N95s for only those in high or very high exposure risk, as defined by the varying responsibilities of the job. See [COVID Preparing work space for COVID-19](#).

MOU with the BTU

On September 16, 2020, the School Committee ratified the Memorandum of Understanding agreed to by BPS and the Boston Teachers Union. With respect to PPE, the MOU provides as follows:

- All staff will be provided 2 reusable face coverings
- Disposable masks will be available
- Face shields may be used in addition to, but not instead of, face masks.
- Transparent masks will be provided to staff when necessary
- Nurses will be provided PPE as required for health care workers
- “Staff members whose assignments regularly place them in close physical proximity to students who may not be able to socially distance, are unable to wear a mask, or who require physical support, such as hand-over-hand support and modeling, feeding, toileting and/or physical restraint, will be provided an appropriate supply of PPE appropriate to their work duties and in compliance with DESE and public health guidelines (**N95 respirators and/or additional protective gear as needed:** face shields, gowns, gloves) and means of disposal. ... [emphasis added.]

BPS is fully complying with all of the regulatory guidance set forth above, as well as with its contractual obligations under the MOU.

Can I bring and wear my own N95?

Absolutely.