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MACCP POSITION OPPOSING MASKING REQUIREMENTS IN FAMILY CHILD CARE HOMES

Governor Walz is considering masking requirements that other states and localities have implemented. State indoor masking requirements would affect providers and children in family child care and other child care settings.

The Minnesota Association of Child Care Professionals opposes a masking requirement for family child care homes because masks have not been shown to reduce the risks in child care settings and many experts—including MDH—have stated that their use with children could increase the risk of spreading COVID-19. We believe it would negatively impact the social, emotional, and physical development of the children in our care:

- It will increase the risk of spreading COVID-19 and other viruses as children are likely to touch their faces more often while wearing a mask. Masks will move and likely need to be readjusted throughout the day by the child or the provider.
- Many children would not be able to explain when they're having difficulty breathing or panicking due to the mask. Masks pose a risk for children of suffocation or rebreathing expired carbon dioxide.
- It defeats the purpose when some children wouldn't wear a mask due to the child's age, health issues, or special needs.
- Children would remove the masks for meals, naptime, and playing outside; therefore, why would they need to wear masks otherwise?
- The small groups in family child care homes already align with MDH and CDC guidelines.
- To the best of our knowledge, there haven't been any outbreaks in family child care homes for the last four months. This shows that family child care providers are doing everything possible to ensure the health and safety of the children in their care.
- We are concerned that the strings and small pieces on some masks could pose a choking and/or strangulation hazard.
- Many families will not be able to afford masks, especially when children need to wear a clean one each day. Some masks are obviously more expensive than others. We worry this could create socioeconomic disparity: "haves" vs. "have-nots."
- How can providers ensure that the masks are washed/new each day? If families don't wash or replace them every day, it will increase the risk of spreading COVID-19 and other viruses.
- Since PPE needs to be prioritized for healthcare professionals, first responders, and other workers, a mask requirement could create a shortage of PPE for those who need it the most.
- Children who can't wear them may be stigmatized, or vice versa.
- It could create feelings of fear when children wonder why they need to start wearing masks or for children who are too young to understand any explanations about it.
- Children rely on reading facial expressions for communication. Masks limit those opportunities and could discourage some children from speaking while wearing them.
- Young children could pull at the provider's mask while being held or close to the provider, increasing the risk of spreading the virus.
- Many providers would choose to close, further increasing the loss of child care options for families during these critical times.

We call on Governor Walz, MDH, and DHS to consider the unintended consequences of applying any public masking requirements to family child care homes and continue to allow them to be optional.