

Safer Federal Workforce Task Force
**Initial Implementation Guidance for Federal Agencies
on COVID-19 Community Levels and Mask-Wearing**

Purpose

On February 25, 2022, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) set recommendations related to [COVID-19 Community Levels](#), which measure the impact of COVID-19 illness on health and healthcare systems. Layered prevention strategies—like staying up to date on vaccines, screening testing, ventilation, and wearing masks—can help limit severe disease and reduce the potential for strain on the healthcare system.

Pursuant to Executive Order 13991, Federal agencies follow CDC guidelines for mask-wearing and other public health measures. This document provides Federal agencies with initial implementation guidance they should follow in utilizing the CDC’s COVID-19 Community Levels to determine the appropriate mask-wearing and screening testing requirements for each Federal facility at a given time. Further Safer Federal Workforce Task Force guidance will address the intersection of COVID-19 Community Levels with other workplace safety protocols for Federal agencies.

CDC notes that some settings, such as high-risk congregate settings, might include additional layers of prevention. In addition, recommendations based on COVID-19 Community Levels may not apply in healthcare settings, which should follow relevant regulations and guidance.

Agencies should implement the mask-wearing and screening testing protocols set forth in this guidance as soon as operationally feasible and no later than Friday, March 4, 2022.

Federal Agency Protocols for Mask-Wearing and Screening Testing Based on COVID-19 Community Levels

CDC has provided [county-level data](#) showing the COVID-19 Community Level for each county in the United States. For Federal facilities in the United States, agencies should utilize that data in determining the COVID-19 Community Level for a given facility by looking to the COVID-19 Community Level for the county in which the facility is located. Where a locality imposes more protective pandemic-related safety requirements, those requirements should be followed in Federal facilities within that locality.

Federal agency masking and screening testing protocols based on COVID-19 Community Levels	
When the COVID-19 Community Level is LOW in the county where a Federal facility is located	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mask-Wearing: Agencies do not need to require individuals to wear masks in that Federal facility, regardless of vaccination status. • Screening Testing: Agencies do not need to utilize their screening testing program in that Federal facility.
When the COVID-19 Community Level is MEDIUM in the county where a Federal facility is located	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mask-Wearing: Agencies do not need to require individuals to wear masks in that Federal facility, regardless of vaccination status. • Screening Testing: Agencies should utilize their screening testing programs in that Federal facility, consistent with the protocols the agency has established for screening testing that align with guidance from the Safer Federal Workforce Task Force.

Federal agency masking and screening testing protocols based on COVID-19 Community Levels	
When the COVID-19 Community Level is HIGH in the county where a Federal facility is located	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mask-Wearing: Agencies should require individuals to wear masks in that Federal facility, regardless of vaccination status and consistent with CDC and Task Force guidance on mask-wearing. • Screening Testing: Agencies should utilize their screening testing program in that Federal facility, consistent with the protocols the agency has established for screening testing that align with guidance from the Safer Federal Workforce Task Force.

As noted above, further Task Force guidance will address the intersection of [COVID-19 Community Levels](#) with other workplace safety protocols for Federal agencies. At this time, agencies should follow existing Task Force guidance with respect to other COVID-19 workplace protocols.

Further Considerations for Mask-Wearing

Agencies should ensure that individuals can wear a mask if they choose regardless of COVID-19 Community Level and consistent with agency protocols. When the COVID-19 Community Level is HIGH, agencies should require all individuals to wear masks in Federal facilities, regardless of vaccination status.

Consistent with CDC recommendations and Safer Federal Workforce Task Force [guidance](#) for quarantine and isolation, people with symptoms, a positive test, or exposure to someone with COVID-19 should wear a mask for the required period of time.

Determining COVID-19 Community Level for Federal Facilities

As noted above, CDC has provided [county-level data](#) showing the COVID-19 Community Level for each county in the United States. Agencies should utilize that data in determining the COVID-19 Community Level for a given facility by looking to the COVID-19 Community Level for the county in which the facility is located.

Agencies should review the COVID-19 Community Level for each of their facilities on a weekly basis, to determine any changes that need to be made to agency COVID-19 workplace safety protocols for the upcoming week; for example, an agency could review the COVID-19 Community Level each Friday and implement any changes to agency safety protocols due to changes in the COVID-19 Community Level starting the following Monday.

If agencies have implementation challenges or unique operational circumstances that may require other or additional prevention measures, please reach out to the Safer Federal Workforce Task Force for consultation, consistent with existing processes for determining necessary exceptions to COVID-19 workplace safety protocols.