



# GUIDANCE AND TALKING POINTS

[utep.edu/recovery](https://utep.edu/recovery)

## **Addressing COVID-related Compliance Requirements Involving Face Coverings and Social Distancing**

This guide is intended to assist the UTEP community in achieving compliance and supporting a safe and healthy environment at UTEP.

As part of UTEP's ongoing COVID-19 mitigation efforts and to maintain a healthy and safe environment for all members of our campus community, faculty, staff, students and visitors must abide by a [Temporary Health and Safety Policy](#) which requires individuals to (1) wear face coverings when in common areas of campus where others are present; (2) maintain a minimum separation of six feet between yourself and others, when possible, and arrange spaces to make this possible in almost all circumstances; (3) Adhere to room/space limitations on number of occupants; and (4) wash hands frequently.

As we acclimate to this new policy, it is important to remain respectful when reminding faculty, staff, students and visitors of the university's requirements. The Talking Points below are provided to guide your interactions with individuals on the UTEP campus. The scenarios below although specifically address face coverings, are also applicable for violations of other requirements of UTEP's Temporary Health and Safety Policy.

### **Talking Points**

1. A faculty, staff, student or visitor is found not wearing their face covering:
  - a. Do not make assumptions. Consider there may be reasons to not wear a face covering. For example, a lack of awareness or understanding of the reasons behind the policy, forgetfulness, or medical reasons. Keep in mind that non-university affiliated individuals are less likely to be aware of university requirements. Initiate any encounter by politely reminding the person that they are not wearing a face covering and/or making them aware that UTEP has a required policy. If they correct the issue, thank them for doing this. If they provide an explanation, listen to so you can approach their concerns from a place of information and empathy.
  - b. Be respectful. Listen and have empathy for the individual. Remember to be courteous and respectful when advising them of the need to wear a face covering while on campus. Most individuals will comply when respectfully approached. Prominently displayed signage throughout campus will assist with this coaching. If any of this signage is within your vision, you can refer them to it to help. Have the conversation privately while still maintaining safety through social distancing.

*"I'm not sure if you are aware but face coverings are required while on-campus. I know this is a new policy, and this is a significant change but it's important for your health and safety and the safety of others that a face covering is worn."*

- c. Be direct. Make a clear statement that this is an important safety requirement; everyone adheres to this campus-wide policy; and there are consequences of not wearing a mask. Avoid yelling, arguing, demeaning or insulting behavior.

*"Even though this is a new policy, it is important for you to understand that violations of safety procedures are not acceptable and I need your cooperation."*

2. An individual is found not wearing their face covering and refuses to put it on after direction to do so by a University official:
  - a. Be direct. Make a clear statement that refusal to put on their face covering while on the UTEP campus is a violation of a campus safety requirement. If they individual does not comply, request that they leave the building, classroom or area immediately. Report the incident to the appropriate office for further follow-up.

*"Your refusal to put on your face covering is a violation of our policy and is not acceptable. I need to ask that you leave campus immediately. I will be reporting the incident to the appropriate office so that they can follow-up accordingly."*

3. An individual refuses to leave campus after being directed to do so for not wearing a face covering by a University official:
  - a. Be respectful and remain calm. Do not escalate the situation or further engage the individual. Report the behavior to the appropriate department for follow-up and compliance. If the individual is disruptive and/or presents a concern of violence, call UTEP Police for assistance.
4. An individual is regularly found not wearing a face covering and although complies with requests to do so, the behavior is ongoing and repetitive:
  - a. Be respectful. Make a clear statement that this is an important safety requirement to wear a face covering and that repeatedly not doing so despite complying when asked, is not acceptable. Request that the individual wear a face covering and report the behavior to the appropriate office.

*"I am finding that you are regularly on campus not wearing a face covering despite requesting that you do so. Individuals are required to wear face coverings while on-campus. A face covering can be uncomfortable, especially when the weather is hot, but it is for your safety as well as the safety of others. However, repeatedly not complying with the policy until asked to do so, is not acceptable. I'm asking you once again to wear a face covering and will be reporting the behavior to the appropriate office so that they may follow-up accordingly."*

If at any time you feel uncomfortable confronting the behavior, please ask for assistance from a colleague or University Official.

### **Additional Resources and Tools**

If an individual is non-compliant with a request to follow safety protocols, or there are repeated reports of non-compliance, a member of the University community may report violations to the following departments:

- Faculty – [Provost Office](#)
- Staff – [Employee Relations](#) in Human Resources
- Students - [Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution](#)
- Visitors – Sponsoring Department
- Contractors – [Facilities Services](#) or 915-747-PETE
- Vendors – [Purchasing and General Services](#)

### **Medical Concerns with Wearing a Face Covering**

Some people have medical conditions that may prevent them from wearing face coverings. If a faculty, staff or student shares that they are not wearing a face covering due to medical reasons, advise them that they may request reasonable accommodation by contacting the following offices:

- Faculty and Staff – [Equal Opportunity Office](#)
- Students - [Center for Accommodations and Support Services](#)

### **Religious Accommodation and Face Covering**

If an individual shares that they are not wearing a face covering due to a sincerely held religious belief, advise them that a face covering is required when in common areas of campus or when others are present. If their religious observation prevents them from wearing a face covering, ask them nicely to leave campus and contact the [Equal Opportunity Office](#) to request an accommodation.

### **Lost, Soiled or Forgotten Face Coverings**

If an individual has lost, soiled or forgotten their face covering, refer the individual to the UTEP Bookstore to purchase a face covering or the Information Center in Union East for a one-time face covering, while supplies last. Advise the individual it is a best practice to “wear one, carry one” when it comes to face coverings to account for these types of situations.

### **Breaks and Meals**

Individuals may remove their face coverings in a private, vacant office space or outdoors for purposes of comfort and incidental needs, such as taking medication, eating a snack, etc.