



## County Administrator

Robert W. Wilson  
701-241-5770  
wilsonro@casscountynd.gov

## M E M O

TO: Commissioners  
FROM: Robert W. Wilson  
DATE: December 14, 2021  
SUBJECT: County Facemask Policy

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On December 6<sup>th</sup> the Board considered updates to the County's policy for employee and visitor use of facemasks in County facilities. After considering input from Fargo Cass Public Health the Commission discussed various amendment options, but ultimately deferred action. I was directed to meet with department heads to solicit feedback on potential policy updates.

Department heads meet on December 13<sup>th</sup>. We had a thoughtful discussion that in many ways reflected the variety of opinions shared by the public. I have attached emails I've received from department heads regarding this topic, and this proposed policy change, so you can see for yourself the feedback received.

Attached is the current policy (September 21, 2021), along with the draft updated language (December 7, 2021).

One point of discussion that appeared to have broad support was if different policies or practices are implemented in different offices or buildings, those distinctions should be set building by building – not department by department. It was agreed that department by department differences would be confusing for employees and the public.

A representative from Fargo Cass Public Health will attend and be available to answer your questions.

PO Box 2806  
211 Ninth Street South  
Fargo, North Dakota 58108

[www.casscountynd.gov](http://www.casscountynd.gov)

**Cass County Facemask Policy**  
Effective September 21, 2021

Facemasks:

1. Cloth and disposable paper masks are acceptable for limiting the spread of COVID-19
2. Disposable masks will be provided to all visitors at the entrances to all County buildings including the Courthouse, Annex, Jail, Law Enforcement Center, Highway Department & Emergency Management Offices.
3. Visitors shall wear the mask provided throughout their stay in a County Building. (Unless they indicate they are unable to wear a mask.)
4. Employees shall wear masks while in County buildings in the following situations:
  - Anytime they meet with a member of the public indoors.
  - Anytime they are in an indoor space with others in close proximity (masks are not needed in your own office space if no one else is present but are needed when you leave your space going to communal areas.)
5. Employees are strongly encouraged to wear masks while in-doors in non-county buildings in the following situations:
  - Anytime they meet with a member of the public indoors.
  - Anytime they are in an indoor space with others in close proximity
6. This policy will remain in place until rescinded or amended.

**Cass County Facemask Policy**  
Effective ~~September 21, 2021~~ December 7, 2021

Facemasks:

1. Cloth and disposable paper masks are acceptable for limiting the spread of COVID-19
2. Disposable masks will be ~~provided~~ available to all visitors at the entrances to all County buildings including the Courthouse, Annex, Jail, Law Enforcement Center, Highway Department & Emergency Management Offices.
3. Visitors ~~shall~~ are encouraged to wear the mask provided throughout their stay in a County Building. ~~(Unless they indicate they are unable to wear a mask.)~~
4. Employees ~~shall~~ are encouraged to wear masks while in County buildings in the following situations:
  - Anytime they meet with a member of the public indoors.
  - Anytime they are in an indoor space with others in close proximity (masks are not needed in your own office space if no one else is present but are needed when you leave your space going to communal areas.)
5. ~~Employees are strongly encouraged to wear masks while in doors in non-county buildings in the following situations:~~
  - ~~Anytime they meet with a member of the public indoors.~~
  - ~~Anytime they are in an indoor space with others in close proximity~~
6. This policy will remain in place until rescinded or amended.

## Wilson, Robert

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**From:** Jahner, Jesse  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 14, 2021 10:03 AM  
**To:** Wilson, Robert  
**Subject:** Mask Mandate

Robert,

I am not in favor of a mask mandate. I am okay with it being encouraged, but I think it should be up to the individual.

*Jesse Jahner*

*Cass County Sheriff*

*1612 23<sup>rd</sup> Ave. N.*

*Fargo, ND 58102*

*(701)793-6187*

*Department Homeland Security National Leadership Academy Session No. 3*

*National Command & Staff College Session No. 10*

*JADLEST Nationally Certified Instructor*





## Wilson, Robert

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**From:** Moeller, Deborah  
**Sent:** Monday, December 13, 2021 10:32 AM  
**To:** Wilson, Robert  
**Subject:** Mask Policy Talking Points

Robert,

Thank you for arranging this morning's meeting. While I fully realize I am in the minority in my opinion regarding masking, I just wanted to pass along my talking points (and a few others I didn't address) in the event you wanted to provide the commission an alternative view for their consideration. As I mentioned, it is easier for me to take this position because I am not an elected official and I also do not face many of the issues that some of other departments are facing. In addition, due to my past and more current health history, perhaps I have a little different perspective in that I no longer take my health for granted.

- 1) Changing the mask policy is premature given the current COVID climate:
  - a) We are in the winter and holiday season where we typically see higher COVID numbers
  - b) Are the numbers actually higher than published because those who are exhibiting symptoms are not being tested because of a potential quarantine or because people mistakenly believe it is only a "cold" or "sinus infection" because they have been vaccinated and are not experiencing more debilitating symptoms?
- 2) Even though many of us have been vaccinated and boosted, we can still test positive and/or pass on the virus.
- 3) Leaving it up to "personal responsibility" has not moved us toward herd immunity:
  - a) Encouraging mask use does not work - most will not wear a mask if they see others are not
  - b) Many have no problem complying with a mandate when they see others are wearing masks or that it is a requirement for admittance to a building/business or an event
- 4) If, what I believe is, the vocal minority is not willing to do their part, we as local government and county leaders, need to be an example of working toward the "greater good" in support of:
  - a) Community and employee health in general
  - b) the front-line health care workers and our health care system – a change to the masking policies reinforce the idea that they are fighting this battle alone – this has the potential of only making it more difficult to retain and recruit workers in what is already an industry in short supply
  - c) the same goes for the educational system; and,
  - d) those businesses who are trying to do the right thing in keeping safe their employees and customers
  - e) It appears we are no longer following the advice of our experts
- 5) COVID is having a huge economic impact – if we can move further toward containing the virus and herd immunity, we can get back to focusing on all the other big issues like the mental health crisis, food insecurity, etc.

As we all know, the right decision is not always the easy decision and I do not envy the commission in the decisions they have to make. Although I've shared my opinion on this matter, I respect my fellow DH's opinions and the decision of the commission. If the policy should change, I will simply continue to encourage my department staff and visitors to mask up as they have been doing these past months.

Again, thank you for arranging the good discussion.

*Deb Moeller*

## Wilson, Robert

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**From:** Madrigga, Brandy  
**Sent:** Wednesday, December 8, 2021 2:37 PM  
**To:** Wilson, Robert  
**Subject:** RE: Department Head Meeting - Facemask Feedback

Thank you Robert,

I have discussed with the Finance Office and the overwhelming majority feel that they would prefer to have the choice to mask versus a mandate. The risk of COVID is not going away so we are ready to learn how to work with COVID and assess our own personal risks. We would like to continue to put an emphasis on handwashing and physical distancing practices as well as promoting both physical and mental health.

The 2 main public facing services that we provide would be the front counter and weddings. The front counter already has several safety factors in place, like plexiglass and a 3-foot counter to provide a physical barrier in addition to hand sanitizer placed on the counter. Weddings have been limited to 4 attendees, physical distancing is in place by way of markers on the floor placed 6 feet apart, and ceremonies last less than 15 minutes. If our staff feels comfortable, the wedding parties may be offered the option of proceeding with the ceremony unmasked or they will be provided the option of waiting until our staff leave to take pictures unmasked.

My personal opinion is to encourage mask wearing but allow people to ability assess their own personal risk. We have a myriad of different scenarios that would be difficult to place in 1 mask mandate and allowing for personal accountability would be my preference.

In regards to the policy, I would like to suggest removing the line in the brackets after the second bullet in point 4. It seems to contradict the main statement.

4. Employees are encouraged to wear masks while in County buildings in the following situations:

- Anytime they meet with a member of the public indoors.
- Anytime they are in an indoor space with others in close proximity.

From:

4. Employees ~~shall~~ are encouraged to wear masks while in County buildings in the following situations:

- Anytime they meet with a member of the public indoors.
- Anytime they are in an indoor space with others in close proximity (~~masks are not needed in your own office space if no one else is present but are needed when you leave your space going to communal areas.~~)

Regards,

**Brandy Madrigga**

**From:** Wilson, Robert <WilsonRo@casscountynd.gov>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, December 8, 2021 11:35 AM  
**To:** Madrigga, Brandy <MadriggaB@casscountynd.gov>  
**Subject:** RE: Department Head Meeting - Facemask Feedback

## Wilson, Robert

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**From:** Ussatis, Rita  
**Sent:** Wednesday, December 8, 2021 1:00 PM  
**To:** Wilson, Robert  
**Subject:** RE: Department Head Meeting - Facemask Feedback

We are comfortable doing whatever is decided. We would lean to encouraging wearing masks but we also need to follow NDSU policies and they change all the time as well.

Rita Ussatis  
Extension Agent/Cass County  
Family and Community Wellness  
**NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY**

1010 2nd Ave S, Box 2806  
Fargo ND 58108  
Phone - 701.241.5700  
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[UssatisR@casscountynynd.gov](mailto:UssatisR@casscountynynd.gov)  
[www.ndsu.edu](http://www.ndsu.edu)



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**From:** Wilson, Robert <[WilsonRo@casscountynynd.gov](mailto:WilsonRo@casscountynynd.gov)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, December 8, 2021 12:02 PM  
**To:** Ussatis, Rita <[UssatisR@casscountynynd.gov](mailto:UssatisR@casscountynynd.gov)>  
**Subject:** RE: Department Head Meeting - Facemask Feedback

Okay. If you would like to provide input via email, please feel free.  
-Robert

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**From:** Ussatis, Rita <[UssatisR@casscountynynd.gov](mailto:UssatisR@casscountynynd.gov)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, December 8, 2021 7:19 AM  
**To:** Wilson, Robert <[WilsonRo@casscountynynd.gov](mailto:WilsonRo@casscountynynd.gov)>  
**Subject:** RE: Department Head Meeting - Facemask Feedback

Good Morning,

I am taking Dec 13<sup>th</sup> off so I will be unavailable for the meeting.

Rita

Rita Ussatis  
Extension Agent/Cass County  
Family and Community Wellness  
**NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY**



## Wilson, Robert

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**From:** Prochniak, Jim  
**Sent:** Wednesday, December 8, 2021 9:05 AM  
**To:** Wilson, Robert  
**Subject:** RE: Department Head Meeting - Facemask Feedback

Robert,

I had a chance to listen to the commission discussion regarding facemasks. Personally, I don't wear them other than places which are required and would be in favor of dropping the requirement. If I understand the commission correctly, they are not in favor of a 'mixed bag' for options and would rather have an "all or nothing option."  
I have my reservations that the DH's will come to a unanimous agreement on this topic.

**NOTE:** The only other item I would mention. As we have battled COVID within this region (Fargo/West Fargo/Cass County) for the past 18 months+ our elected officials made progress in making many like decisions to avoid confusion for our citizens. Fargo doesn't require masks anymore and neither does West Fargo. It would seem confusing and inconsistent for the County to 'go their own' at this time.

Thanks  
Jim

**From:** Wilson, Robert <WilsonRo@casscountynd.gov>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, December 8, 2021 6:24 AM  
**To:** {Cass}-Department Heads <Cass-DH@casscountynd.gov>  
**Cc:** Albrecht, Taylor <AlbrechtT@casscountynd.gov>; Solum, Catlin <SolumC@casscountynd.gov>  
**Subject:** Department Head Meeting - Facemask Feedback

Department Heads,

Good morning. You may have listened to the Monday Commission discussion about the current facemask policy for employees and visitors in County buildings. If not, there was a lengthy discussion but ultimately they took no action.

I shared your email feedback from last week that was generally positive to the proposal, but noted there was at least one department that may continue to wear masks within the office – and others who individually will act on the 'encouragement' to continue wearing masks. Thank you to all who provided feedback. It makes these discussions easier when I receive feedback.

Ultimately they asked me to meet with Department Heads about the proposed policy (attached) and report back with our feedback at the next meeting on December 20<sup>th</sup>.

This meeting doesn't need to be long. We'll set up a Teams link and I'll look for your input.

I'll propose we meet at one of the following times this coming Monday. Please share your preference and I'll follow-up with the invite.

8:30 a.m. Monday, December 13<sup>th</sup>  
9:30 a.m. Monday, December 13<sup>th</sup> or  
10:30 a.m. Monday, December 13<sup>th</sup>



## Wilson, Robert

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**From:** Deery, Christopher  
**Sent:** Thursday, December 2, 2021 10:13 AM  
**To:** Ross, Kriste; Wilson, Robert; {Cass}-Department Heads  
**Subject:** Re: Suggested Facemask Policy

Veteran services will continue to follow suite and have been active in getting information out through our page. Considering some veterans ages and diagnosed conditions will do case but case basis and or take all guidance from the tower. Thanks

Chris

Christopher J. Deery  
Veteran Service Officer  
Cass County Veteran Service  
211 9th Street South  
Fargo, ND 58108  
701-241-5746  
Fax 701-239-6751  
DeeryC@casscountynd.gov

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**From:** Ross, Kriste <RossK@casscountynd.gov>  
**Sent:** Thursday, December 2, 2021 9:46:44 AM  
**To:** Wilson, Robert <WilsonRo@casscountynd.gov>; {Cass}-Department Heads <Cass-DH@casscountynd.gov>  
**Subject:** RE: Suggested Facemask Policy

I agree with the edits, and good timing to re-evaluate as Fargo Public Schools are no longer requiring masks beginning January 17.

**Kriste Rehkamp Ross, B.S., F-ABMDI, Coroner**

Cass County Coroner's Office  
1220 25th St. S., Fargo, ND 58103  
p. (701) 241-5938 f. (701) 241-5922  
[LinkedIn](#) | [Website](#)

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**From:** Wilson, Robert  
**Sent:** Thursday, December 2, 2021 6:51 AM  
**To:** {Cass}-Department Heads <Cass-DH@casscountynd.gov>  
**Subject:** Suggested Facemask Policy

Department Heads,

## Wilson, Robert

---

**From:** Jahner, Jesse  
**Sent:** Thursday, December 2, 2021 9:37 AM  
**To:** Burdick, Birch; Wilson, Robert; {Cass}-Department Heads  
**Subject:** RE: Suggested Facemask Policy

Looks good to me, thank you.

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**From:** Burdick, Birch <BurdickB@casscountynynd.gov>  
**Sent:** Thursday, December 2, 2021 8:07 AM  
**To:** Wilson, Robert <WilsonRo@casscountynynd.gov>; {Cass}-Department Heads <Cass-DH@casscountynynd.gov>  
**Subject:** RE: Suggested Facemask Policy

Whatever the Commission votes on is what we will do. I will probably personally follow the “encouragements”, but I doubt many others will. It will be interesting to see what happens in the days ahead as the new variant has, I believe, now been found in the US.

---

**From:** Wilson, Robert <[WilsonRo@casscountynynd.gov](mailto:WilsonRo@casscountynynd.gov)>  
**Sent:** Thursday, December 2, 2021 6:51 AM  
**To:** {Cass}-Department Heads <[Cass-DH@casscountynynd.gov](mailto:Cass-DH@casscountynynd.gov)>  
**Subject:** Suggested Facemask Policy

Department Heads,

I have been asked to add an item to this coming Monday’s Commission agenda regarding the current mask policy in county buildings. I’ve provided a copy of the draft update for your review. Please take a look and share any feedback you would like the Board to consider.

Because I edited a PDF rather than a Word copy, tracking my edits is a bit cumbersome. If you hover over the text with a red strike through it, in lines #2, #3 & #4 a pop-up box will appear with suggested alternative language. In other cases a red strike simply represents a deletion.

Representatives of Fargo Cass Public Health will also have a copy of this draft and will be at the meeting.

I appreciate your feedback.

Robert W. Wilson  
County Administrator  
Cass County Government  
Fargo, ND  
701-241-5770 (Office)  
701-850-7372 (Mobile)  
[WilsonRo@casscountynynd.gov](mailto:WilsonRo@casscountynynd.gov)

## Wilson, Robert

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**From:** Prochniak, Jim  
**Sent:** Thursday, December 2, 2021 8:33 AM  
**To:** Wilson, Robert  
**Subject:** RE: Suggested Facemask Policy

Robert,

I think your changes are simple and clear.

Anecdotally, I feel the mask issue was loosely practiced within the confines of County offices/buildings. However, outside of work settings if employees take the mask off it kind of defeats the purpose. I would include myself in this group.

Thanks  
Jim

**From:** Wilson, Robert <WilsonRo@casscountynd.gov>  
**Sent:** Thursday, December 2, 2021 6:51 AM  
**To:** {Cass}-Department Heads <Cass-DH@casscountynd.gov>  
**Subject:** Suggested Facemask Policy

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701-241-5770 (Office)  
701-850-7372 (Mobile)  
[WilsonRo@casscountynd.gov](mailto:WilsonRo@casscountynd.gov)

## Wilson, Robert

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**From:** Benson, Jason  
**Sent:** Thursday, December 2, 2021 7:28 AM  
**To:** Wilson, Robert; {Cass}-Department Heads  
**Subject:** Re: Suggested Facemask Policy

I'm ok with this change. I don't see any issues with getting rid of the mask mandate at the Highway Department facilities.

Jason

Jason Benson  
Cass County Engineer

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**From:** Wilson, Robert <WilsonRo@casscountynd.gov>  
**Sent:** Thursday, December 2, 2021 6:50:40 AM  
**To:** {Cass}-Department Heads <Cass-DH@casscountynd.gov>  
**Subject:** Suggested Facemask Policy

Department Heads,

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I appreciate your feedback.

Robert W. Wilson  
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701-241-5770 (Office)  
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[WilsonRo@casscountynd.gov](mailto:WilsonRo@casscountynd.gov)