

Safer Federal Workforce Task Force
**Updated Implementation Guidance for Federal Agencies
on COVID-19 Community Levels**

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, and help individuals and communities decide which prevention actions to take based on the latest information. 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. On August 11, 2022, CDC updated the prevention strategies it [recommends](#) for LOW, MEDIUM, and HIGH COVID-19 Community Levels.

Pursuant to Section 2 of Executive Order (EO) 13991 on “Protecting the Federal Workforce and Requiring Mask Wearing,” Federal agencies follow CDC guidelines for mask-wearing and other public health measures. This document from the Safer Federal Workforce Task Force (Task Force) provides Federal agencies with updated 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.

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.

Federal Agency Protocols 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 at 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 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: To be consistent with Task Force guidance, in most settings, agencies would need to communicate, such as through signage, that mask-wearing is optional, and should not otherwise require individuals to wear a mask, regardless of vaccination status, except where required by Federal, State, Tribal, territorial, or local laws, rules, regulations, or existing collective bargaining agreements.• Screening Testing: To be consistent with Task Force guidance, agencies should not utilize screening testing programs established for high-risk settings¹ in that Federal facility, if any.• Maintaining Distance from Others and Avoiding Crowding: Agencies do not need to post signage about individuals considering avoiding crowding and physical distancing.

¹ For the purposes of this guidance, high-risk settings include certain Federal facilities—or certain specific settings within Federal facilities—where (1) COVID-19 transmission risk is high, and (2) the population present onsite is at [high risk of severe outcomes from COVID-19](#) or there is limited access to healthcare.

Federal agency protocols based on COVID-19 Community Levels	
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: To be consistent with Task Force guidance, in most settings, agencies would need to communicate, such as through signage, that mask-wearing is optional, and should not otherwise require individuals to wear a mask, regardless of vaccination status, except where required by Federal, State, Tribal, territorial, or local laws, rules, regulations, or existing collective bargaining agreements. • Screening Testing: Where agencies have established serial screening testing programs and/or point-in-time screening testing requirements for certain agency-identified high-risk settings, screening testing must be implemented for individuals enrolled in the program or subject to the requirement, regardless of vaccination status, pursuant to EO 13991 and consistent with CDC guidance. • Maintaining Distance from Others and Avoiding Crowding: To be consistent with Task Force guidance, agencies would need to post signage encouraging individuals, regardless of vaccination status, to consider avoiding crowding and physically distancing themselves from others in indoor common areas, and meeting rooms in Federal facilities, and in high-risk settings in Federal facilities.
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: Pursuant to EO 13991 and consistent with CDC and Task Force guidance, agencies must require all individuals to wear high-quality masks or respirators (such as N95s) in that Federal facility, regardless of vaccination status. • Screening Testing: Where agencies have established serial screening testing programs and/or point-in-time screening testing requirements for certain agency-identified high-risk settings, screening testing must be implemented for individuals enrolled in the program or subject to the requirement, regardless of vaccination status, pursuant to EO 13991 and consistent with CDC guidance. • Maintaining Distance from Others and Avoiding Crowding: To be consistent with Task Force guidance, agencies would need to post signage encouraging individuals, regardless of vaccination status, to consider avoiding crowding and physically distancing themselves from others in indoor common areas, and meeting rooms in Federal facilities, and in high-risk settings in Federal facilities.

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.

Agencies with implementation challenges or operational circumstances that may require other or additional prevention measures should reach out to the Safer Federal Workforce Task Force for consultation, consistent with [existing exceptions processes](#).