

DE-ESCALATION GUIDE: COVID-Related Customer Interactions

Below is guidance on how to defuse situations while interacting with customers, depending on State/County/Mall mandates.

SCENARIO 1: MASK MANDATES ARE NOT REQUIRED BY THE STATE/COUNTY/MALL CUSTOMER ENTERS WITHOUT A MASK:

If a customer comes in without a face covering/mask, customers should be politely encouraged to comply with our posted safety and health protocols.

“Protecting you and our associates is the #1 priority. We ask that you cooperate with our store regulation that requires all persons to wear face masks or face coverings. If you do not have one, we’d be happy to provide you with one so you can safely enjoy shopping in our store.”

If the customer does not comply, **please continue to service the customer** and ensure associates who work with this customer continue to stay at a safe social distance as we will not refuse service.

SCENARIO 2: MASK MANDATES / CAPACITY LIMITS ARE NOT REQUIRED BY THE STATE/COUNTY/MALL CUSTOMER ENTERS AND ASKS:

- **WHY ARE YOU STILL WEARING A MASK IF IT’S NOT REQUIRED?**
- **WHY ARE YOU STILL LIMITING CAPACITY AND/OR PRACTICING SOCIAL DISTANCING IF IT IS NOT MANDATED IN YOUR STATE/COUNTY/MALL?**

If the customer does not have a face covering/mask, first politely encourage them to comply with our posted safety and health protocols following the instruction in scenario 1. The below can be used to respond to questions around why we have not changed our policies.

Short response:

“We understand that in many COVID safety practices are being relaxed, however our company is taking a conservative approach due to the nature of our business.”

Detailed response (for a customer that presses the issue):

“We understand that many retailers may begin to relax their safety restrictions, and the CDC has provided new guidance around face mask use for vaccinated individuals, however given the closeness of many of our customer interactions and out of an abundance of caution, we are choosing to maintain our internal procedures (including the use of face masks) in an effort to help keep our associates, customers and their loved ones safe and healthy at this time.”

SCENARIO 3: MASK MANDATES ARE REQUIRED BY THE STATE/COUNTY/MALL

If a customer comes in without a face covering/mask and your State/County/Mall mandates all customers wear a face covering/mask, you may offer them one. If the customer refuses to wear a face covering/mask in a store where it is mandated by State/County/Mall, we do not want our associates to get into a confrontation with the customer. Rather, customers should be politely encouraged to comply with our posted safety and health protocols.

DE-ESCALATION GUIDE: COVID-Related Customer Interactions

“Protecting you and our associates is the #1 priority. We ask that you cooperate with the regulations that require all persons to wear face masks or face coverings. If you do not have one, we’d be happy to provide you with one so you can safely enjoy shopping in our store.”

If the customer refuses:

“Without a mask or face covering, the State/County/Mall guidance is that retailers should turn customers away, which we’d prefer not to do. If you prefer not to wear a mask we do ask that you cover your nose and mouth with some type of covering; ie. bandana, etc.”

If the customer still refuses to comply:

“If you are choosing not to wear a mask or face covering at this time, I do apologize but given the State/County/Mall guidance I will have to inform mall security as they are here to ensure the safety of those within the center. Thank you for your understanding.”

WHEN TO CALL MALL SECURITY?

If the customer is causing a disruption that creates an immediate threat of harm to associates/customers, if the customer refuses to wear a face covering/mask in a store where it is mandated by State/County/Mall guidance direct a member of the team to call mall security while the manager on duty continues to work towards de-escalating the situation.

WHEN TO CALL THE POLICE?

If the situation becomes violent or dangerous for associates or customers, call 911 immediately.

WHO IS NOT REQUIRED TO WEAR FACE MASKS/FACE COVERING?

Face coverings/masks do not have to be worn by:

- Children; esp. younger than 2 years old
- Any customer who discloses they are unable to wear a face covering/mask due to a medical condition

If any customer makes you aware they have a medical condition, please note that they do not have to disclose what the condition is or produce any documentation to support the medical condition and should be allowed to enter the store.