

Considerations for the Use of Safety Measures During Standardized Administration

Riverside Insights has received many inquiries regarding the use of face masks/shields during testing and the impact of their use on the administration and results of standardized assessments, such as the *Woodcock-Johnson IV*.

With the 2020-2021 school year quickly approaching, most districts are still creating plans for if and how to reopen schools. One thing appears quite certain at this point: Most educational and medical settings will be requiring the use of face masks or safety measures, per the CDC's recommendations.

Both examiners and examinees are encouraged to adhere to the policies of the testing location in accordance to local and federal guidance, which will likely mean wearing a face mask while engaging in testing. Given that this may be the case for the foreseeable future, we all need to adjust while considering the true impact on the outcome data.

COVID-19 has impacted our world for months now and the presence of a face mask or shield has become a common occurrence. Although it may still feel somewhat out of the ordinary, many people are now accustomed to seeing others wearing face masks. As with any testing session, it will be important to build appropriate rapport with the examinee prior to testing. The process for doing so will vary based on the age of the examinee and the reason for referral. An opening conversation about how wearing a face mask or shield makes the examinee feel, how it impacts their comfort, and what you can do to support them during the testing session should occur prior to any assessment.

Transparent face masks or face shields have been identified as most favorable by many psychologists and teachers as they allow facial expressions to be seen clearly. When these masks and shields are worn, there is little impact on the ability to see the entire face, which helps to create a situation very similar to a typical testing session. When possible, it is ideal to have a clear, transparent covering. Another strategy for minimizing the risk of exposure may be clear plexiglass barriers between examiner and examinee. As with masks, if this strategy is chosen, the barrier should be addressed in the process of rapport building to set the examinee at ease with its presence.

It will be important for the examiner to check in regularly with the examinee through the testing session(s). Based on age and comfort of the examinee with wearing a face covering, more breaks may be needed.

If proper rapport is established and the examiner regularly checks in with the examinee regarding their comfort level during testing, testing should be able to occur without much impact on the tasks required by the *Woodcock-Johnson IV* Suite of Assessments, as well as the *WJ IV Tests of Early Cognitive and Academic Development*, *Woodcock-Muñoz Language Survey III*, *Batería IV Woodcock-Muñoz Pruebas de habilidades cognitivas*, and *Batería IV Woodcock-Muñoz: Pruebas de aprovechamiento*.



When reporting results, the examiner should identify the safety precautions taken during testing, as well as the examinee's response to the safety measures. If any tests appeared to be impacted by the examinee's distraction or discomfort with the safety measures taken, this should be noted in the report and the scores of that test should be interpreted with caution. For example, you might have a student who is frequently distracted by her face mask when completing timed fluency tasks. After describing the safety measures taken, you might include this statement in the evaluation report: 'Marissa was frequently distracted by her face mask. This appeared to impact her performance most significantly during the fluency tests. During fluency-related tasks, she required multiple examiner prompts to continue working when she would stop to pull at her face mask. Results of these tests should be interpreted with caution and may underestimate Marissa's true ability.'

If the safety measures did not appear to have a significant impact on the standardized administration of the test or on the comfort level of the examinee during testing, scores should be interpreted as usual.

Riverside Insights is here to support all our customers while we navigate returning to school and work.

Sincerely,

The Riverside Clinical Team