

Cloth Mask Community Mobilization Toolkit

Vermont's residential care homes and visiting nurse organizations desperately need non-medical cloth masks to supplement their medical PPE. This toolkit is intended to help community organizers working on COVID-19 response (and anyone who wants to lead a local sewing effort!) to lead a successful community sewing effort to get masks to healthcare workers and meet this urgent need.

Toolkit Elements:

- This overview document
- Keys to Success document
- MakerSphere Sewing Instructions & Patterns 1 & 2
- List of healthcare needs (Google doc)

Your work matters! Your friends and neighbors are eager to help their friends and neighbors working in healthcare, especially if you make it easy and energizing to engage with your project. Check out the keys to success and start thinking about the sewing folks you know – women and men! – who might be able to help you create some Mask Making Mojo in your community

The tips and suggestions in the toolkit are based on the work done by the Waterbury Area MakerSphere Cooperative (MakerSphere), an arts & making nonprofit organization in Waterbury, Vermont. MakerSphere seized on the need for masks early and within the space of a couple of weeks, had dozens of volunteers sewing hundreds of masks. Their success inspired us to encourage others to stand up mask-making efforts in their own communities.

Who needs cloth masks?

The nursing homes, residential care homes, and assisted living residences in your community need cloth masks. The visiting nurses and home, health & hospice organization in your county needs cloth masks. And the hospital in your region needs masks. All of these organizations have varying levels of access to medical PPE, but it is hard to get and supply is tight. They need cloth masks for non-medical staff, to supplement their PPE, and for patients to wear during care.

Through their professional associations, we have asked organizations around the state to let us know how many masks they need. We are hoping that volunteers in each area of the state will make masks and donate them to these organizations, who serve the most vulnerable among us.

Who can lead a mask-making project?

This is an excellent project if you have access to a group of volunteers. The key roles for the organizers are communicating the effort, sourcing the materials, distributing the kits and delivering the masks to the organizations and facilities you're making for. All of these things can be done using social media and existing channels to communicate; many folks are eager to be helpful and can donate skills or materials or machines. You need just a few core people and you can get this going and start seeing results (which get people excited to do more!) fast.

Who can make masks?

Anyone with access to a sewing machine can stitch masks! If your group provides pre-cut mask kits with all the fabric and instructions, your volunteer sewers are free to make the masks without worrying about figuring out pattern, material, and instructions. Their trips to get materials are reduced, and masks are produced faster.

What pattern should we use?

About the mask pattern: There are many different face mask designs available on the internet, so many in fact that it can be very confusing to select which one should be made. You can use the MakerSphere pattern and information provided here, or you can go to the website of the hospital nearest you and look at their website to see what they recommend.

We do recommend deciding on a pattern that your effort will use (rather than letting each sewer decide for themselves), and creating pre-cut kits to provide to your volunteers. It's *much* easier and faster for everyone involved.

Where do you get materials?

Mostly, you need clean fabric in good shape, and, if you decide to go with the ribbon or bias tape for ties, ribbon or bias tape. You can get both ribbon and

bias tape in bulk online, or you can make your own DIY cloth tie backs. Your sewing volunteers will provide the thread.

Quilters often have a lot of fabric that they may wish to donate, and fabric stores may sell to you at a discount or cost. As noted in the Keys to Success document, don't accept fabric from just anyone – it may be old or rotten or impractical for this purpose, and then you have to deal with disposing of it.

You may be able to do a little local fundraising to buy materials. Don't be shy about asking if you need resources! People really are willing to help with just about anything.

Questions? The MakerSphere team is willing to answer questions from group leaders about how they are working on their community sewing project, in order to help you with yours! You can email masks.makersphere@gmail.com

If you have questions about which healthcare organizations in your area need cloth masks, Liz Schlegel (liz.schlegel@gmail.com) or Beth Gilpin (Beth@bethgilpin.com) are happy to help out.

Any other general questions can go to Liz or Beth!

And one last note! Remember your local project will change, be edited, and evolve as more people get involved and that's okay! Because that's how you build community engagement – everyone ultimately is a part of the process.