



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES
Aging and Long-Term Support Administration
PO Box 45600, Olympia, Washington 98504-5600

August 6, 2020

ALTSA: AFH #2020-036
ALTSA: ALF #2020-035
ALTSA: ESF #2020-027
ALTSA: NH #2020-055
ALTSA: ICF/IID #2020-028
ALTSA: CCRSS #2020-027

ORDER OF THE SECRETARY OF HEALTH 20-03.1 FACE COVERINGS - STATEWIDE

Dear Provider/Superintendent/Administrator:

This letter is to inform you of the [Order of the Secretary of Health 20-03.1, Face Coverings-Statewide](#) (the order), that became effective July 25, 2020, and how it applies to congregate living settings. The order requires every person in Washington State to wear a face covering that covers their nose and mouth when they are outside their house, mobile home, apartment, condominium, hotel or motel room, or other dwelling unit. Some exceptions are listed in the order and noted below.

Under the order, congregate living settings include Residential Care Services regulated settings including nursing homes, assisted living facilities, adult family homes, enhanced services facilities, group training homes, and intermediate care facilities for individuals with intellectual disabilities. According to the order, congregate living settings do not include supported living homes and state-operated living alternatives.

In accordance with the order, if a person lives in a congregate living setting where they share living facilities with other residents, *their dwelling unit is their bedroom*. They must wear a face covering when they are outside their bedroom, including inside the building, subject to the exceptions noted in the order and this letter.

- As the dwelling unit in congregate living settings is defined as the client or resident's bedroom, a bedroom includes any living space, bathroom, or facility attached to the bedroom that is not generally open to other residents or clients of the setting.
- Non-family members who live in the congregate living setting are not household members. Family members are defined in the order.
- Every person must wear a face covering in both public and non-public settings outside their home including, but not limited to, outdoor areas, elevators, hallways, kitchens, lounges, lobbies, and laundry rooms.

Individuals may remove their face coverings when they are outside their house, mobile home, apartment, condominium, or dwelling unit under the following circumstances:

- While engaged in the act of eating or drinking, provided that people eating or drinking in congregate living settings maintain a distance of at least six feet from each other to the extent reasonably possible;
- While engaged in indoor or outdoor exercise activities, such as walking, hiking, bicycling, or running, provided that a distance of at least six feet is maintained from non-household members;
- While in an outdoor area, provided that a distance of at least six feet is maintained from non-household members;
- While showering, bathing, or engaging in other personal hygiene or grooming activities that require the removal of the face covering;

- When any party to a communication is deaf or hard of hearing and not wearing a face covering is essential to communication;
- While obtaining a service that requires temporary removal of the face covering;
- While sleeping;
- When necessary to confirm an individual's identity;
- When federal or state law prohibits wearing a face covering or requires the removal of a face covering; and
- When unable to put on a face covering due to an emergency.

The following individuals are exempt from the requirements to wear a face covering:

Persons with a medical condition, mental health condition, developmental or cognitive condition, or disability that prevents wearing a face covering. This includes, but is not limited to, persons with a medical condition for whom wearing a face covering could obstruct breathing or who are unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove a face covering without assistance.

For purposes of the order, a face covering must:

- Fit snugly against the sides of the face;
- Completely cover the nose and mouth;
- Be secured with ties, ear loops, elastic bands, or other equally effective method;
- Include at least one layer of cloth, although multiple layers are strongly recommended;
- Allow for breathing without restriction; and
- Be capable of being laundered and machine dried without damage or change to the shape.

A face covering may also be a mask or covering that provides a higher level of protection than a cloth face covering, such as a respirator (N95) mask, though people are generally encouraged to use cloth face coverings to preserve access to these higher grade face coverings for health care and other settings where they are most needed.

If the order and the action of any other agency or official are in conflict, the more protective requirement must be followed, unless prohibited by federal or state statute or rule. As an example, if a local health officer issues an order requiring people to wear a face covering in outdoor public settings at all times, without an exception for physical distancing, then the local health officer's order must be followed because it is more protective than this order.

The order remains in effect until rescinded or superseded by a subsequent order of the Secretary of Health or until the Governor issues a proclamation declaring the termination of the State of Emergency declared by [Proclamation 20-05](#), as amended and extended by subsequent amendatory proclamations, whichever is earlier.

Thank you for your continued commitment to resident and client health and safety. If you have any questions, please contact the RCS Policy Unit, rcspolicy@dshs.wa.gov.

Sincerely,



Candace Goehring, Director
Residential Care Services

DSHS: "Transforming Lives"