



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

October 6, 2023

ALTSA: AFH #2023-033
ALTSA: ALF #2023-024
ALTSA: CCRSS #2023-018
ALTSA: ESF #2023-021
ALTSA: ICF/IID #2023-013
ALTSA: NH #2023-033

**RCS STAFF MASK WEARING AND RELATED PROCEDURES DURING THE 2023-2024
RESPIRATORY ILLNESS SEASON**

Dear Provider/Administrator/Superintendent:

Starting Monday October 16, 2023, all RCS staff will wear face masks when conducting on-site visits in long-term care (LTC) settings. RCS considered the following factors to determine staff mask wearing guidance:

- Vulnerability of residents and clients living in LTC settings.
- RCS staff pattern of going from building to building for onsite visits, encountering different populations of residents, clients, and staff, sometimes in the same day.
- How the use of masks benefits staff, residents, clients, family, visitors, and providers' well-being.
- Department of Health (DOH) [COVID-19 Mask Guidance](#) dated 08/31/2023 which identified factors to consider when deciding whether to wear masks.
- Respiratory illness activity.

In March 2024, RCS will reevaluate ending mask wearing during on-site visits in LTC settings.

RCS Mask Wearing and Related Procedures:

- RCS staff don masks before entering a LTC setting and wear masks throughout the visit.
- RCS staff may practice extended wear, wearing the same mask throughout the visit, changing the mask if it becomes soiled, wet or is removed for any reason.
- RCS Staff could choose not to wear masks when they are in well-defined areas that are restricted from resident/client access (e.g., staff meeting rooms). If masks are removed:
 - The door will be kept closed.
 - RCS staff should don a mask when LTC setting staff or residents or clients enter or are interviewed in the room.
- RCS Staff self-screen daily for symptoms of respiratory illness (fever of 100.4°F or greater, runny nose, cough, sneeze, wheezing, shortness of breath.) If feeling ill or have illness symptoms of any kind – RCS staff will stay home.
- RCS follows CDC [Return to Work Guidance for Healthcare Personnel](#)

Thank you for your continued commitment to resident/client health and safety. If you have any questions, please contact Katherine Ander, Infection Control Prevention and Projects Specialist, at (360) 742-6037 or katherine.ander@dshs.wa.gov.

Sincerely,

Amy Abbott, Director
Residential Care Services

DSHS: "Transforming Lives"