



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES
Home and Community Living Administration
PO Box 45600 Olympia, WA 98504-5600

September 22, 2025

AFH #2025-041
ALF #2025-039
CCRSS #2025-021
ESF #2025-026
ICF/IID #2025-012
NH #2025-044

**RCS STAFF MASK WEARING AND RELATED PROCEDURES DURING THE
2025-2026 RESPIRATORY ILLNESS SEASON**

Dear Provider/Administrator/Superintendent,

This letter supersedes HCLA Letters: AFH #2025-009, ALF #2025-008, CCRSS #2025-007, ESF #2025-006, ICF/IID #2025-004, NH #2025-012

After reviewing available data, the decision has been made that starting Wednesday, October 1, 2025, all Residential Care Services (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:

- The 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 on the same day.
- How the use of masks benefits staff, residents, clients, family, visitors, and providers' well-being.
- National and local respiratory illness activity.
- Guidance from the Department of Health (DOH) and Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC).

In March 2026, RCS will reevaluate the ending of mask wearing during on-site visits in LTC settings.

RCS Mask Wearing and Related Procedures:

- RCS staff don masks before entering an 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, residents, or clients enter or are interviewed in the room.
- RCS staff will self-monitor for signs or symptoms of respiratory illness and take necessary steps to limit disease exposure or transmission in LTC settings.
- RCS staff follow [CDC Interim Guidance for Managing Healthcare Personnel with SARSCoV-2 Infection or Exposure to SARS-CoV-2 | COVID-19 | CDC.](#)

RCS Dear Provider Letter: **RCS STAFF MASK WEARING AND RELATED PROCEDURES
DURING THE 2025-2026 RESPIRATORY ILLNESS SEASON**

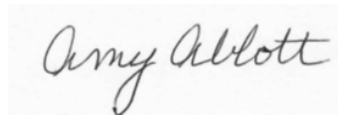
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Thank you for your continued commitment to the safety and well-being of those in your care.

If you have any questions, please contact Jamie Ford, IPC Specialist at
jamie.ford1@dshs.wa.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amy Abbott". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Amy Abbott, Director
Residential Care Services
DSHS: *"Partnering with People"*