



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES
Home and Community Living Administration
Residential Care Services • P.O. Box 45600 • Olympia, Washington 98504

March 24, 2026

This letter supersedes AL TSA Letters: AFH #2025-041; ALF #2025-039; ESF #2025-026; ICF/IID #2025-012; CCRSS #2025-021 and NH #2025-044

AL TSA: AFH #2026-011
AL TSA: ALF #2026-012
AL TSA: CCRSS #2026-007
AL TSA: ESF #2026-010
AL TSA: ICF/IID #2026-003
AL TSA: NH #2026-013

Update to RCS Staff Mask Wearing in LTC Settings During Respiratory Illness Season

Dear Provider/Administrator/Superintendent,

This letter is to notify you, on Monday, March 30, 2026, Residential Care Services (RCS) is rescinding the requirement that all RCS staff wear a procedure, surgical, or higher equivalent mask upon entry and while conducting on-site visits in long-term care (LTC) settings. This decision is based upon a review of current respiratory virus data, public health recommendations, and consideration of the vulnerabilities of residents / clients served in LTC settings.

Background: On September 22, 2025, you were notified RCS would implement a requirement for RCS staff to wear a mask when conducting onsite visits in LTC settings. This message coincided with the respiratory virus season and data which demonstrated increased viral transmission of COVID-19, influenza, and Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV). The message included notification RCS would reevaluate this decision in March 2026.

RCS Mask Wearing and Related Procedures
Starting Monday March 30, 2026, RCS staff:

- May choose to voluntarily wear a mask inside LTC settings.
- Will have agency-issued personal protective equipment (PPE) available for use as needed.
- Will comply with LTC setting's policy / procedure regarding masking and will don a mask upon request when in a facility or home.
- Will comply with current Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and public health guidance where donning a mask is recommended (i.e., implementation of standard and transmission-based precautions).

RCS will continue to monitor respiratory virus data with consideration of public health recommendations and notify you of any changes to RCS staff masking procedures.

Provider Letter: Update to RCS Staff Mask Wearing in LTC Settings During Respiratory Illness Season

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Thanks for your continued commitment to resident health and safety. If you have any questions, please contact Jamie Ford: Jamie.ford1@dshs.wa.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Amy Abbott".

Amy Abbott, Director
Residential Care Services

DSHS: *"Partnering with People"*