



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

March 18, 2022
Amended April 1, 2022

ALTSA: AFH #2022-012
ALTSA: ALF #2022-012
ALTSA: CCRSS #2022-009
ALTSA: ESF #2022-011
ALTSA: ICF/IID #2022-009
ALTSA: NH #2022-020

**SECRETARY OF HEALTH ORDER 20-03.8, FACE COVERINGS STATEWIDE
EFFECTIVE MARCH 12, 2022**

Dear Administrator, Provider, or Superintendent:

This letter is amended to be consistent with the most recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) face covering [recommendations](#) including updating vaccination status from “fully vaccinated” to “up-to-date” and consideration of community transmission rates.

The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) updated the Secretary of Health Order [20-03.8](#), Face Coverings – Statewide **effective March 12, 2022**. Frequently asked questions or other guidance previously issued by DOH explaining or interpreting provisions of this order are included.

Order 20-03.8 requires every person in Washington State to wear a face covering that covers their nose and mouth when they are indoors in long-term care settings unless an allowance or exemption described below applies. In some cases the CDC does have more stringent requirements and providers are required to follow those requirements as indicated in the [Long-Term Care COVID Response Plans](#). The information outlined below includes the more stringent CDC recommendations where applicable.

People are not required to wear a face covering in long-term care settings in any of the following situations:

- While working in areas not generally accessible to the public when only employees are present, but only if the employee is **up-to-date** with vaccination against COVID-19 (see Additional Provisions below for the meaning of “up-to-date”) **and the facility is in a county with low to moderate community transmission rates, as shown on the [CDC Data Tracker](#)**;
- While working alone isolated from interactions with others with little or no expectation of in-person interruptions;
- While swimming or engaged in other water sports or recreation;
- While engaged in the act of eating or drinking;
- 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 or engaged in a transient activity that requires temporary and very brief removal of the face covering;
- While sleeping;
- When necessary to confirm the person’s identity;
- When federal or state law prohibits wearing a face covering or requires the removal of a face covering;

- When unable to put on a face covering due to an emergency.

The following are exempt from the requirement to wear a face covering in long-term care settings:

- Children younger than five years old are exempt from the requirement to wear a face covering.
 - Children who are younger than two years old should never wear face coverings due to the risk of suffocation.
 - Children who are two, three, or four years old, with the assistance and close supervision of an adult, are strongly recommended to wear a face covering at all times in public settings when around non-household members;
- People with a medical condition, mental health condition, developmental or cognitive condition, or disability that prevents wearing a face covering are exempt from the requirement to wear a face covering. This includes, but is not limited to, people 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; and
- If a health care setting or long-term care setting is in a private residence, people who are not paid to provide health care, long-term care, or personal care services are exempt from the requirement to wear a face covering in that setting.

Additional Provisions

- For purposes of this 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; and
 - Include at least one layer of tightly woven fabric without visible holes, although multiple layers are strongly recommended.
- A face covering may also be a mask or face covering that provides a higher level of protection than a cloth face covering, such as a medical procedure/surgical mask, a KN95 mask, a KF94 mask, or an N95 mask.
- Clear masks or cloth masks with a clear plastic panel may be used when interacting with people who are deaf or hard of hearing, young children or students learning to read, students learning a new language, people with disabilities, and people who need to see the proper shape of the mouth for making appropriate vowel sounds.
- A person's COVID-19 vaccination status is considered **up-to-date** after a person has received all recommended doses in their primary series of COVID-19 vaccine (two-dose series for Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna and a single-dose vaccine for Johnson and Johnson (J&J)/Janssen) **and a booster dose when eligible**.
- Face covering requirements imposed by other public agencies or officials.
 - Follow face covering requirements lawfully imposed by another public agency or official if they are more protective than the requirements in this order. If they are less protective, then this order must be followed.
 - Any face covering requirements imposed pursuant to an order of the Governor take precedence over this order.

Thank you for your continued commitment to resident health and safety. If you have any questions, please send an email to RCSPolicy@dshs.wa.gov.

Sincerely,



Mike Anbesse, Director
Residential Care Service