



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

September 16, 2024

**This letter supersedes ALTSA Letters: AFH #2024-015; ALF #2024-013; CCRSS #2024-013; ESF #2024-014; ICF/IID #2024-010; NH #2024-018**

ALTSA: AFH #2024-038  
ALTSA: ALF #2024-033  
ALTSA: CCRSS #2024-028  
ALTSA: ESF #2024-030  
ALTSA: ICF/IID #2024-020  
ALTSA: NH #2024-045

**RCS STAFF MASK WEARING AND RELATED PROCEDURES DURING THE 2024-2025  
RESPIRATORY ILLNESS SEASON.**

Dear Provider/Administrator/Superintendent,

After review of all available data, the decision has been made that starting Tuesday, October 1, 2024, 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.
- National and local respiratory illness activity.
- Guidance from the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) [Masks and Respiratory Viruses Prevention](#) and [Preventing Transmission of Viral Respiratory Pathogens in Healthcare Settings](#)

In March 2025, 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, 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 SARS-CoV-2 Infection or Exposure to SARS-CoV-2 | COVID-19 | CDC](#)

ALISA Provider Letter: RCS STAFF MASK WEARING AND RELATED PROCEDURES DURING THE 2023-2024  
RESPIRATORY ILLNESS SEASON.

September 16, 2024

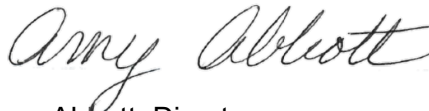
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Thank you for your continued commitment to resident/client health and safety. If you have any questions, please contact:

**Linda Dunn**, *Regulatory QA Program Manager - Infection Prevention and Control & Emergency Preparedness* at (360) 972-5527 or [Linda.Dunn@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:Linda.Dunn@dshs.wa.gov)

**Jamie Ford**, *Infection Prevention and Control Specialist* at (360) 688-0539 or [jamie.ford1@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:jamie.ford1@dshs.wa.gov)

Sincerely,

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

Amy Abbott, Director  
Residential Care Services  
DSHS: "Transforming Lives"