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| þÿ | ***Commonwealth of Massachusetts*** |
| ***Executive Office of Health and Human Services*** |
| **Department of Youth Services** |
| **DYS Universal Mask Policy** |

**Process to Obtain and Discard Procedure/Surgical Mask**

A procedural face mask will be issued **at the start of each shift,** for the staff working on the units. Staff will receive a mask at the entrance after they pass the employee screening and will be used throughout the shift. In the event that the mask becomes visibly soiled, saturated or damaged, a new mask must be obtained. Should you need a replacement mask, you must request one from supervisory personnel on the unit where you are working. We ask all personnel to make every effort to help preserve the supply of PPE and reduce the need for replacement masks whenever possible. Infection Prevention guidelines should be followed on the use and re-use of procedure/surgical masks.

**At the end of shift,** staffwill be asked to doff their face mask as they exit the building. Used procedure/surgical masks should be discarded in the trash.

**Infection Prevention Guidance on Procedure/Surgical Mask Use and Re-Use**

**To Doff facemask with intent to reuse**

**1. Perform hand hygiene**

2. Remove mask

o Remove procedure mask by holding the ear loops. The front is contaminated, so remove slowly and carefully.

o Remove surgical mask by untying lower ties FIRST. Untie upper ties last. The front is contaminated, so remove slowly and carefully. Ensure ties do not fall into clean interior side of mask.

3. After removing facemask, visually inspect for contamination, distortion in shape/form. If soiled, torn, or saturated the mask should be discarded.

**4.** If the facemask is NOT visibly soiled, torn, or saturated, carefully store **on a paper towel exterior side down.**

**5. Perform hand hygiene.**

**To Re-Don Mask**

**1. Perform hand hygiene**

2. Grasp mask

o Pinch procedure mask at the ear loops or

o Grasp upper ties on surgical mask

3. Place over face

o For procedure mask: Secure ear loops behind the ears. Secure mask.

o For surgical mask: Secure upper ties first, behind head. End by securing lower ties behind head.

4. Perform hand hygiene

A disposable facemask can be worn throughout your shift if not visibly soiled, torn or saturated, and NOT touched while delivering care to symptomatic youth.

**Visual Guidance**

The following images are intended to provide clarification to avoid potential errors in the proper use and re-use of face masks.



*Figure 1 – This image demonstrates approved wear of face mask. Facemask is shown secured over nose and mouth.*



*Figure 2 – This image shows the correct way to store mask when not in use. Notice the exterior of the mask is facing DOWN.*



*Figure 3 - This image shows the correct way to store a surgical mask when not in use. Notice the exterior of the mask is facing DOWN and ties are placed carefully away from the inside of the mask.*

**Conservation of PPE**

DYS is well-positioned and has an adequate, but not inexhaustible, stock of masks for staff utilization. In an effort to maintain the supply, conservation of masks is essential. We have no way to predict how long this pandemic will affect us. In an effort to ensure masks continue to be available to healthcare and direct care staff, we must make all efforts to conserve our supply. In the event the supply of procedure/surgical masks prohibits this strategy, distribution of masks will be prioritized based on the highest risk activities. Supply chain is working diligently to secure additional stocks of procedural masks.

**Rationale to Universal Mask Policy**

Our knowledge regarding COVID-19 is rapidly expanding. This allows us the opportunity to update PPE policies to incorporate the best evidence about issues like mask and respirator reuse and viral transmission. Due to continually evolving evidence, we expect these policies will be further refined and revised.

Given what we have learned about COVID-19, this universal mask approach will serve to:

1. Protect our youth and other staff members should the staff have presymptomatic or asymptomatic COVID-19 infection or develop symptoms at work (a mask achieves source control and decreases the risk of spreading infection).
2. Protect our staff should they come in close contact with an individual with either presymptomatic or mild COVID-19 infection or who has symptoms that have not yet been recognized.

To be successful, this new approach will require support from all of us and require the following:

* Strict adherence to extended use/reuse of masks
* Meticulous adherence to hand hygiene
* Proper mask use and hygiene including wearing the mask as directed to cover the mouth and nose
* Strict avoidance of manipulation/touching the mask to reduce the risk of contamination and self-inoculation

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**Why are we recommending a procedure/surgical mask and not an N95 respirator?**

Similar to influenza and other respiratory viruses, COVID-19 appears to be transmitted primarily through large respiratory droplets. Procedure masks help to provide protection against respiratory droplet spread. In addition, although not thought to be a major route of transmission, there are some data to indicate COVID-19 viral shedding in the presymptomatic stage. Wearing procedure masks in a more generalized manner may help to prevent spread from persons with presymptomatic shedding or persons with very mild disease. Finally, wearing a procedure mask very effectively contains respiratory secretions and may prevent an infected provider from spreading the virus to patients or coworkers. In contrast, N95 respirators provide a higher level of filtration and are important in clinical situations where infectious droplets could become aerosolized. This primarily occurs in specific clinical situations such as when a patient is intubated or undergoes bronchoscopy. N95 respirators are difficult to wear for long periods of time and are impractical for generalized use. Also, the supply of N95 respirators is smaller and our supply would not support universal use. We must reserve N95 use for patients with known or suspected COVID-19 and high-risk situations.

**Does the universal mask policy apply to all DYS staff regardless their work location?**

The universal mask policy applies to employees working in residential facilities.

Personnel that work in non- residential locations are excluded from this requirement. These employees should practice principles of social distancing, respiratory etiquette and frequent hand hygiene. If these workers visit areas where direct care is provided, the mask policy applies as above.