

Policy Name	Masking Policy		
Department Responsible	Not Set	Policy Number	1241
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I. PURPOSE

The masking guidelines are intended to comply with the standards established in the Florida Department of Health and the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) Emergency Rule 59AER22-2 and apply to all employees, visitors, and patients at each Gulfside Healthcare Services clinical setting.

II. POLICY

Gulfside Healthcare Services is committed to reducing the risk of infection and to promote a safe environment for patients, visitors, and employees. This policy provides guidelines for masking. There may be certain instances in which the professional judgment and/or discretion by the health care provider warrants taking other actions. This policy will reflect current guidelines of the Florida Agency for Health Care Administration and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

III. DEFINITIONS

Common area refers to areas in a health care setting where patients are not treated, diagnosed, or examined.

Employee refers to any person under employment or contract of a health care setting, including health care practitioners, administrative staff, maintenance staff, aides, contractors, students, and volunteers.

Health care setting refers to any place where health care practitioners and/or health care providers practice their profession or provide services.

Patient refers to a person receiving services from a health care practitioner or health care provider.

Sterile procedure refers to aseptic procedures with the goal of minimizing the risk of microbial contamination.

Visitor refers to any person in a health care setting who is not an employee or patient of the health care setting.

IV. PROCEDURE

A. MASKING REQUIREMENTS

- a. **EMPLOYEES** will be required to wear a mask within a healthcare setting when the employee is:
 - Exhibiting signs or symptoms of, exposure of, or has been diagnosed with, an infectious disease that can be spread through droplet or airborne transmission.

- Interacting with a patient who is on droplet or airborne transmission-based precautions.
 - Conducting sterile procedures.
 - Entering a specific facility that has an active outbreak with a respiratory pathogen.
 - Providing care to patients when there is substantial prevalence of a respiratory pathogen within the community.
 - Working with a patient whose treating health care practitioner has diagnosed the patient with or confirmed a condition affecting the immune system in a manner which is known to increase risk of transmission of an infection from employees without signs or symptoms of infection to a patient and whose treating practitioner has determined that the use of facial coverings is necessary for the patient's safety.
 - Engaging in non-clinical and potentially hazardous activities that require facial coverings to prevent physical injury or harm in accordance with industry standards.
- b. **PATIENTS** may be required to wear a mask when the patient is in a common area of the healthcare setting and is exhibiting signs or symptoms of, or has been diagnosed with, an infectious disease that can be spread through droplet or airborne transmission.
- c. **VISITORS** may be required to wear a mask within a healthcare setting when the visitor is:
- Exhibiting signs or symptoms of, exposure of, or has a diagnosed infectious disease that can be spread through droplet or airborne transmission.
 - In areas of the health care setting where a sterile procedure is being performed.
 - Visiting a patient who is exhibiting signs or symptoms of, exposure of, or has been diagnosed with an infectious disease that can be spread through droplet or airborne transmission.
 - Visiting a patient whose treating health care practitioner has diagnosed with, or has confirmed as having, a condition affecting the immune system in a manner which is known to increase risk of transmission of an infection from a person without signs or symptoms of infection.

B. OPT OUT PROVISIONS

a. EMPLOYEES

- An employee may opt out of wearing a mask, if based upon the professional judgement of the physician treating the patient, an alternative method of infection control is available.

b. **PATIENTS**

- A patient may opt out of wearing a mask, if based upon the professional judgement of the physician treating the patient, an alternative method of infection control is available. Due to the vulnerable patient population at Gulfside Healthcare Services, alternative methods of infection control may not be available.

c. **VISITORS**

- A visitor may opt out of wearing a facial covering if, based upon the professional judgement of the physician treating the patient who is being visited, an alternative method of infection control is available. Due to the vulnerable patient population at Gulfside Healthcare Services, alternative methods of infection control may not be available.

Source: Florida Administrative Code & Florida Administrative Register. Emergency 59AER23-2. Standards for the Appropriate Use of Facial Coverings for Infection Control. Publish date 7/3/2023 Volume 49/128. Retrieved on July 10, 2023 from <https://www.flrules.org/gateway/ruleNo.asp?id=59AER23-2>