

Press Release

Not for op-ed

DATE: OCTOBER 2, 2024

TO: MENDOCINO COUNTY NEWS MEDIA

FROM: MENDOCINO COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH

CHARLES EVANS, MD, DEPUTY PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICER

Mandated Masking and Strong Recommendation for Up-To-Date Seasonal Influenza for Personnel in Mendocino County Health Care Delivery Facilities

UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF CALIFORNIA HEALTH AND SAFETY CODE SECTIONS 120175, AND EFFECTIVE NOVEMBER 1, 2024, through April 30, 2025, UNTIL RESCINDED, SUPERSEDED OR AMMENDED IN WRITING BY THE HEALTH OFFICER, THE DEPUTY HEALTH OFFICER OF THE COUNTY OF MENDOCINO ORDERS:

1. Effective immediately I respectfully rescind the previous mandated masking order implemented on October 26, 2023.
2. Influenza Vaccinations for Health Care Workers (HCW's) Strongly Recommended: HCW's and operators of Health Care Delivery Facilities shall develop and implement policies which strongly recommend up-to-date seasonal influenza vaccinations for all such employees. The Deputy Health Officer recommends health care workers in patient care areas wear a mask during the Seasonal Influenza regardless of vaccination.
3. Summary: This Order of the Deputy Health Officer requires HCW's that are not vaccinated for flu to wear Face Masks while in Patient Care Areas of Health Care Delivery Facilities during the annual respiratory virus season from November 1, 2024, through April 30, 2025. This Order also requires Employers of HCW's to develop and implement policies which strongly recommends up-to-date seasonal influenza.
4. History: Since the 2017-2018 influenza season the Mendocino County Health Officer has required HCW's to vaccinate or mask to protect themselves and patients in their care against influenza.
5. Basis for this Order: The Health Officer makes this Order due to higher rates of viral infections that can cause severe respiratory illness among people living in Mendocino County annually between late fall and spring. This seasonal increase in circulation of multiple respiratory viruses causes a particular risk to populations more likely to experience severe disease and death if infected, including infants, older adults, and people with impaired immune systems.
6. The Order also requires the operators of Health Care Facilities make Face masks available to all HCW's at each Health Care Facility and to develop and implement a plan to enforce



the masking requirement. N95 or KN95 masks are strongly recommended. If these are not available a tight-fitting surgical mask may be used.

7. Exemptions and Accommodations: The following personnel may be exempt from wearing masks:
 - a. Persons with a diagnosed medical condition, mental health condition, or disability that prevents the individual from wearing a face mask. This includes persons with a medical condition for whom wearing a mask could obstruct breathing.
 - b. Persons who are hearing impaired, or communicating with a person who is hearing impaired, where the ability to see the mouth is essential for communication.
 - c. Persons for whom wearing a mask would create a risk to the person related to their work, as determined by local, state or federal regulators or workplace safety guidelines.
8. Definitions:
 - a. Face Mask means surgical mask, KN95, K94, or N95 respirator. A scarf, ski mask, balaclava, bandana, turtleneck, collar, cloth mask or any mask that has an unfiltered one-way exhaust valve does not qualify as a Face Mask under this Order.
 - b. Health Care Delivery Facility means a setting where patient care is provided indoors. Health Care Facilities include hospitals, clinics, surgery centers, infusion centers, dialysis center, sites that provide inpatient or outpatient health care, skilled nursing facilities, portions of long-term care facilities where nursing care is provided, and other facilities where patient care provided indoors.
 - c. Patient Care Areas means any area that patients regularly access to receive healthcare within a Health Care Delivery Facility. Patient care areas include lobbies, waiting rooms, examination rooms, patient wings, elevators, and hallways use by patients. Patient Care Areas do not include areas such as cafeterias, break rooms or gift shops that are not used for the provision of healthcare or access to areas where healthcare services are provided.
 - d. Personnel Subject to the Order: This Order applies to HCW's which means all paid and unpaid persons who work in indoor settings where (1) health care is provided to individuals, or where (2) persons in care have access for any purpose. This includes workers in health care or other health care settings as well as workers in other direct care settings who have the potential for direct or indirect exposure to patients/clients/residents or influenza airborne aerosols. Workers include, but are not limited to, nurses, nursing assistants, physicians, technicians, therapists, phlebotomists, pharmacists, students and trainees, contractual staff not employed by the covered facility, and persons not directly involved in patient care, but who could be exposed to infectious agents that can be transmitted in the covered setting.
9. Copies of this order shall promptly be (1) made available at the County Public Health, 1120 Dora Street, Ukiah, CA 95482; (2) posted on the Mendocino County Public Health website



<https://www.mendocinocounty.org/departments/public-health> and (3) provided to any member of the public upon request. Questions or comments regarding this order may be directed to Mendocino County Public Health Communicable Disease program at (707) 472-2713.

###