

Subject: Facial Coverings

Responsibility: Direct: Administrator and Director of Nursing
Consultative: Executive Director and Designated Management Consultant Staff

Purpose: Maintain Infection Control Standards within the facility.

Standard: In accordance with the Florida Statutes §408.824 and the standards set forth in the Florida Administrative Code 59AER23-1 and -2, the facility has adopted the following protocol regarding the use of facial coverings for infection control by its residents, visitors, staff members and others coming into the facility.

Definitions:

1. **Common Area** – refers to areas in a health care setting where patients are not treated, diagnosed, or examined.
2. **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.
3. **Facial Covering** – means a cloth or surgical face mask, a face shield, or any other facial covering that covers the mouth and nose.
4. **Patient** – refers to a person receiving services from a health care practitioner or health care provider. (For the purposes of this protocol, the term "residents" is used to indicate persons residing in the facility)
5. **Sterile Areas** – refers to locations where surgery is conducted or where procedures that require aseptic techniques are performed.
6. **Sterile Procedure** – refers to aseptic procedures with the goal of minimizing the risk of microbial contamination to reduce the rate of invasive or surgical site infection
7. **Visitor** – refers to any person in a health care setting who is not an employee or patient (resident) of the health care setting.

Procedures:

1. The facility does not require the universal use of facial coverings by persons in order to gain access to, entry upon, service from, or admission to the facility or otherwise discriminate against persons based on their refusal to wear a facial covering.
2. Persons who freely choose to wear facial coverings while within the facility may do so based upon their personal preference.

3. Facial coverings remain an important intervention in preventing respiratory bacterial and viral transmission. The facility and its health care practitioners may choose to require a resident to wear a facial covering only when the resident is in a common area of the facility and is exhibiting signs or symptoms of or has been diagnosed as having an infectious disease that can be spread through droplet or airborne transmission.
4. The facility and its health care practitioners may choose to require a visitor to wear a facial covering only when the visitor is:
 - a. exhibiting signs or symptoms of or has a diagnosed infectious disease that can be spread through droplet or airborne transmission;
 - b. in sterile areas of the facility or an area where sterile procedures are being performed;
 - c. in a resident or clinical room with a resident who is exhibiting signs or symptoms of or has a diagnosed infectious disease that can be spread through droplet or airborne transmission; or
 - d. visiting a resident 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 to the resident's safety.

Opt-out Requirements of 59AER23-2 when facial coverings are being required.

1. The facility will follow the regulations of 59AER23-2 for persons requesting to opt-out of wearing a facial covering.
2. The facility and its health care practitioners who choose to require a facial covering for any resident will provide for the opting-out of wearing a facial covering that is in accordance with the Florida Patient Bill of Rights and Responsibilities, section 381.026, F.S., including the following:
 - a. 381.026 (5) Responsibilities Of Patients.- Each patient of a health care provider or health care facility shall respect the health care provider's and health care facility's right to expect behavior on the part of patients which, considering the nature of their illness, is reasonable and responsible.
 - b. 381.026 (4)(b)3. Rights Of Patients - A patient has the right to be given by his or her health care provider information concerning diagnosis, planned course of treatment, alternatives, risks, and prognosis, unless it is medically inadvisable or impossible to give this information to the patient, in which case the information must be given to the patient's guardian or a person designated as the patient's representative. A patient has the right to refuse this information.
 - c. 381.026 (4)(b)4. Rights Of Patients - A patient has the right to refuse any treatment based on information required by this paragraph, except as

otherwise provided by law. The responsible provider shall document any such refusal.

- d. 381.026 (4)(b)5. Rights Of Patients - A patient in a health care facility has the right to know what facility rules and regulations apply to patient conduct.
3. The facility and its health care practitioners who choose to require a facial covering for any visitor will provide for the opting-out of wearing a facial covering when requested by the visitor if an alternative method of infection control or infectious disease prevention is available based upon the individual resident's and visitor's circumstance.
 4. As a health care provider, the facility will allow an employee to opt out of facial covering requirements unless an employee is:
 - a. Conducting sterile procedures,
 - b. Working in a sterile area,
 - c. 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,
 - d. With a patient on droplet or airborne isolation, or
 - e. Engaging in non-clinical potentially hazardous activities that require facial coverings to prevent physical injury or harm in accordance with industry standards.