**The Arc Carroll County**

**PPE Policy and FAQs**

Given the widespread community transmission of COVID-19, The Arc Carroll County (The Arc) remains committed to providing a high-quality, compassionate and safe experience for our clients while ensuring the safety of our workforce. To this end, employees, visitors, and clients will be asked to wear a mask while on The Arc premises. We recognize this is a departure from standard infection prevention; however, the CDC has published guidelines recommending all persons wear cloth face coverings in public settings where social distancing cannot be achieved. These practices will be continually monitored and reevaluated.

With the increasing prevalence of COVID-19 in the community, the risk of exposure to an infected person continues to increase, even in individuals without typical symptoms.

Employees are to self-monitor for symptoms concerning COVID-19 infection at the beginning of every shift. If an employee feels they are displaying symptoms related to the virus, they should notify their manager and Human Resources. The most common symptoms of COVID-19 may include any of the following:

* Mild Cough
* Infrequent Cough
* Temp of 100F to 103.5F that lowers under 100F after one hour of fever reducing medication administration
* Headache that persists or recurs after one hour of pain relief medication administration
* Nausea/Vomiting/Diarrhea
* Body Aches/Pains of unknown origin
* Sore throat
* Loss of Sense of Smell, Taste, and/or Appetite
* Chills
* Repeated Shaking with Chills
* Diffuse Rash, especially beginning on hands and feet (Only in individuals under the age 21)- \*ask how old client is when presenting with this symptom.
* Fatigue
* Congestion or Runny Nose

**Rationale to Universal PPE Policy**

Transmission of COVID-19 is primarily via droplets which come in contact with mucus membranes. Masks are recommended to protect the airway. 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 PPE approach will serve to:

1. Protect our community should employees or clients have pre-symptomatic or asymptomatic COVID-19 infection
2. Protect our employees should they come in close contact with an individual with either pre-symptomatic 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 across 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, and
* Strict avoidance of manipulation/touching the mask or eye protection to reduce the risk of contamination and self-inoculation

All employees will be required to wear a face masks, at all times.

A face mask will be issued at the start of each shift for those who do not have their own. The mask will be used throughout the shift. In the event that the mask becomes visibly soiled, saturated or damaged, a new mask must be obtained. Stock will be securely stored in the supply area. Should an employee need a replacement mask, they must request one from their supervisor.

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. More information can be found at the end of this document.

**At the end of shift,** employees/clients may remove their face mask as they exit the building. Receptacles will be placed at each exit so that masks may be collected for potential recycling/washing. Damaged masks should be discarded in the trash.

Non-soiled face masks may be re-used, upon return to work, if appropriate reuse and storage guidelines are observed.

**Employees in Office Spaces**

Individuals working in settings where social distancing measures are difficult to maintain, are asked to wear either a mask provided by the Arc, or a homemade cloth mask while on a The Arc campus.

The Arc provided masks will be available at the main entrance and \_\_\_\_\_. The mask will be used throughout the shift. In the event that the mask becomes visibly soiled, saturated or damaged, a new mask must be obtained or laundered. We ask all personnel to make every effort to help preserve the supply of PPE and reduce the need for replacement masks whenever possible.

Employees may remove their mask as they exit the building. Receptacles will be placed at each exit so that masks may be collected for nightly laundering. Please do not place visibly soiled, saturated, or torn or damaged procedure/surgical masks in these receptacles, they should be discarded in the trash.

**Clients and Visitors**

The Arc will require clients and any visitors to wear a mask while on The Arc campus. Clients and visitors may wear a mask from home. Clients needing a mask, upon arrival, may obtain a mask at the main entrance. Clients with a fever or cough will be asked to go home for the day and check their symptoms before returning. Visitors and non-symptomatic clients who wear their own cloth mask to campus are asked to keep it in place until they leave the campus.

**Conservation of PPE**

The Arc has an adequate, but not inexhaustible, stock of masks for staff and client 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 employees, we must make all efforts to conserve our supply. We are working diligently to secure additional stocks of masks.

**Infection Prevention Guidance on Mask Use and Re-Use**

To remove facemask with intent to reuse:

1. Perform hand hygiene
2. Remove mask
   1. Remove an ear loop style mask by holding the ear loops. The front is contaminated, so remove slowly and carefully.
   2. Remove a tie style 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 of mask down.
5. Perform hand hygiene.

To Re-Don Mask

1. Perform hand hygiene
2. Grasp mask
   1. Pinch an ear loop style mask at the ear loops or
   2. Grasp a tie style mask by upper ties on surgical mask
3. Place over face
   1. For ear loop style mask: Secure ear loops behind the ears. Secure mask.
   2. For tie style mask: Secure upper ties first, behind head. End by securing lower ties behind head.
4. Perform hand hygiene

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**If I prefer a face shield, where do I get one?**

Talk to supervisor about where these can be obtained. Follow the extended use/re-use guidelines.

**What type of cloth mask can someone wear?**

The Arc will be making masks available for employees. Furthermore, CDC has issued guidelines for sewing a mask that individuals can wear as a face covering. Cloth mask should:

* fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face.
* be secured with ties or ear loops.
* include 2 or more layers of fabric.
* allow for breathing without restriction.
* be made of a fabric or material that can be laundered and machine dried without damage or change to shape.

**How does someone safely clean a cloth mask?**

A cloth mask can be washed in a washing machine with any detergent. After placing the mask in the washing machine, hands should be washed. Dry masks on high heat.

**Does the universal mask policy apply to every member of the workforce working anywhere in The Arc?**

The universal mask policy applies to ALL employees although specific mask type may vary by site of work. Please reference the guidance found earlier in this document. All personnel should wear a facemask when walking through common areas such as connecting hallways and break rooms as well as in areas where programs are delivered. Employees should practice principles of social distancing, respiratory etiquette and frequent hand hygiene in addition to wearing a facemask.

**Should visitors be wearing face masks?**

Visitors will be limited in the facility except for certain circumstances. Visitors who do not have their own mask will be provided a face mask upon entry. If a visitor develops symptoms while on the premises, that person should be asked to leave.

**Should all clients be wearing face masks?**

Yes. Clients without symptoms for COVID-19 and who do not have their own cloth mask may be provided an alternative mask. Once in the building, it is recommended that all clients continue to wear their face mask to mitigate exposure risk. This is an evolving situation and will be reevaluated as needed. Individual decisions will be made by The Arc leadership In instances where a client is unwilling or unable to wear a mask.

**In procedural areas, can a single procedural mask be worn continuously, including across different cases?**

Yes, a single mask can be worn across different cases and between cares of different clients. Masks must be changed if they become wet or contaminated during a case.

**Are staff allowed to take off their masks to eat while on premises?**

Staff can take off their masks to eat and drink when they are on premises in a location where they can maintain a distance of 6 feet. Please follow guidelines on appropriate removing found at the end of this document.

**If I need to leave the facility and come back later in my shift, what should I do?**

Every effort should be made to preserve supplies of face masks. An employee may remove their mask and store it for short periods of time as noted at the end of this document and then reuse the mask.

**Should employees be wearing the mask at home and should their families wear masks?**

There is generally no reason for employees and their families to wear masks while at home. Social distancing and taking precautions like washing your hands, using hand sanitizer, and cleaning high touch surfaces frequently should be appropriate for home. At the end of shift, employees may remove their The Arc issued face mask as they exit the building. Receptacles will be placed at each exit so that masks may be collected for potential recycling. However, visibly soiled, saturated, or torn procedure/surgical masks should not be placed in these receptacles. Damaged masks should be discarded in the trash.

**Can staff gather in break rooms and other places to eat and relax, and if so should they leave their procedure/surgical masks on?**

Staff should adhere to the same principles of social distancing when together in break rooms, conference rooms or other spaces. They should allow 6 feet distance from others and should take the appropriate precautions involving hand hygiene and not touching their faces. Masks can be taken off in such areas for eating and drinking. To limit the number of people in a break room, staff should considering staggering their break times.