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The Missouri Hospital Association continues to follow and update members on regulatory changes, including those related to COVID-19. Recently, policy changes from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have generated questions from hospitals on screening and masking requirements in hospitals. Specifically, the release of the February 25 CDC Mask Use and Care recommendations left health care providers wondering if those guidelines apply to health care. Unfortunately, during the last week, there have been differences in opinion among the agencies and state and national organizations as to whether the recommendations apply to hospitals.

MHA has been diligently reaching out for clarification throughout the last week. While there has not been a broad announcement, the CDC recently updated its infection prevention and control for health care providers [site](#) with an alert message about the newly released indoor masking guidance. The intent of this communication is to provide hospitals with the most recent information related to masking and screening in the hospital.

The information provided in the accompanying regulatory tool on masking and screening is intended to provide hospitals with targeted information and resource links of the most recent regulatory guidance impacting hospitals. This same information can be applied to hospital-based clinics and outpatient departments. Hospitals should keep in mind that the Occupational Safety and Health Administration continues to work on developing final regulations for mitigating worker infection from COVID-19. We do not know a planned release date for the guidelines. MHA will continue to monitor and update members as appropriate.

In summary, the guidance on masking released by the CDC on February 25 does not appear to impact infection prevention and control policies at hospitals for staff or visitors. Such policies should reflect the current hospital environment; be based on national guidance of which the CDC is an example; and continually evolve, as appropriate, based on a number of factors such as transmission rates, vaccination rates, guidance changes and others.

For additional questions, please contact me at swillson@mhanet.com or 573-893-3700, ext. 1304.

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Hospital Regulatory Guidance Tool
Masking and Screening of Staff and Visitors

| Regulatory Document | Agency | Date Issued/Revised | Key Message |
|--|--------|---------------------|--|
| <p>Guidance for the Interim Final Rule - Medicare and Medicaid Programs; Omnibus COVID-19 Health Care Staff Vaccination (QSO-22-11-ALL)</p> <p>Attachment D: Hospital</p> <p>Attachment I: CAH</p> | CMS | 1/20/22 | <p>Consistent with guidance found in QSO-21-08-NLTC, CMS does not specifically mention masking or screening as part of the vaccination final rule. Instead, the regulatory requirement includes having a process for ensuring the implementation of additional precautions, intended to mitigate the transmission and spread of COVID-19, for all staff who are not fully vaccinated for COVID-19.</p> |
| <p>Interim Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations for Healthcare Personnel During the COVID-19 Pandemic</p> | CDC | 2/2/22 | <p>The CDC states in the Interim Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations that the new COVID-19 Community Levels recommendations related to masking do not apply in health care settings, such as hospitals and nursing homes. Instead, health care settings should continue to use community transmission rates and continue to follow the CDC's infection prevention and control recommendations for health care settings.</p> <p>Visitor Masking and Screening: Masking and screening still are recommended, according to the CDC. While CMS is not going to tell the hospital that the CDC is the only source of national guidelines, it is widely accepted as such. The guidance does not state that screening must be done in person; however, the hospital should consider how they will ensure those who have recently tested positive, have symptoms or have had close contact with someone who is positive are properly managed.</p> <p>Hospital Staff Masking and Screening: Same as above.</p> |

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| | | | The guidance addresses situations where individuals who are fully vaccinated could go without a mask if in a community with low transmission rates. This guidance has not changed since the last update referenced here. |
| COVID-19 Focused Infection Control Survey Tool for Acute and Continuing Care Providers and Suppliers (QSO-21-08-NLTC) | CMS | 2/4/22 | <p>Visitor Masking and Screening: CMS informs hospitals that they will not provide direction to hospitals on visitor restrictions, including screening. CMS notes facilities should continue to adhere to basic COVID-19 infection prevention principles consistent with national standards of practice.</p> <p>Hospital Staff Masking and Screening: The agency sets the expectation that health care staff comply with basic infection control practices, such as hand hygiene, wearing masks and the use of other personal protective equipment, <u>as appropriate for the situation</u> (i.e., standard, contact, airborne, etc.). Their focus will be on the regulatory requirements surrounding infection control (including vaccination) and the mitigation of disease, and whether the facility consistently follows their own policies which should be based on national standards of practice. The agency states the guidelines produced by the CDC are an example of a source for national standards.</p> |
| Use and Care of Masks | CDC | 2/25/22 | <p>General Public: The CDC released revised guidance on their public-facing site regarding indoor masking recommendations based on COVID-19 Community Levels. At low and medium risk levels, unless compromised, masking indoors is considered a personal preference. The CDC states individuals may choose to wear a mask when around others or if oneself is at higher risk for severe disease.</p> <p>Masking is recommended as the best line of protection if the individual is sick with COVID-19 and/or they are caring for someone who has COVID-19.</p> <p>How does this relate to hospital visitors and staff? The CDC states in the Interim Infection Prevention and Control guidelines that the new COVID-19 Community Levels recommendations do not apply in health care settings, such as hospitals and nursing homes. Instead, health care settings should continue to use community transmission rates and continue to follow the CDC’s infection prevention and control recommendations for health care settings.</p> |