



## **COVID-19 Policy – Support Recipient Safety Across Support Environments Updated: March 25, 2022**

### **Purpose**

Hope Community Resources, Inc (Hope) is committed to providing a safe and healthy workplace and environment for our employees and the recipients who choose our services. The purpose of this policy is to outline COVID-19 risk mitigation strategies for specific support settings at Hope, such as assisted living homes, group and community activities, natural home supports, transportation, etc. Hope has also developed a broad COVID-19 mitigation plan, which includes policies and procedures to minimize the risk of transmission of COVID-19 for both employees and support recipients. For these policies, see the COVID Risk Mitigation Policy, updated as of March 11, 2022.

### **Scope**

This Policy is based on currently available information from the CDC, OSHA, DHSS, and State of Alaska guidance. It is subject to change based on further information. Each circumstance and environment is different and may warrant stricter or different safeguards than what is outlined in policy, which can be directed by the Hope Healthline under the Medical Director's authority. Hope may also amend this Policy based on operational needs.

### **Levels of Protection**

Individuals have varying levels of protection against COVID-19, and this level of protection will fluctuate over time. The following outlines the level of protection each individual has against COVID-19. The level of protection that a support recipient has may impact their need to quarantine or isolate within an assisted living home, and/or when they can return to receiving services.

1. **High** level of protection – Fully vaccinated within the last six months; if fully vaccinated for longer than six months, has received a booster.
2. **Medium** level of protection – Fully vaccinated over six months ago and has not received a booster; or has tested positive for COVID-19 within the last three months and has recovered.
3. **Low** level of protection - Not vaccinated and has not tested positive for COVID-19 within the last three months.

## Mask Requirements

Masking requirements for support recipients vary across support environments at Hope.

1. Assisted living homes, independent living, and natural home environments: Masks are **not** required to be worn by recipients while receiving services in these locations.
2. Supports recipients are strongly encouraged to wear a mask, as tolerated, when receiving supports in community or group settings.
3. Masks are required to be worn by support recipients when in common areas in Hope office buildings and may be required for participating in certain programs or events with Hope.

## Health Screening

Health screening for support recipients is an effective strategy for mitigating the risk of the spread of COVID-19. Guardians and/or support recipients should contact the supervisor to report any symptoms, COVID-19 exposures, or travel. The supervisor must report this information to the Hope Healthline.

In addition, the following screening protocols should be followed:

1. Assisted living homes: Residents in assisted living homes are routinely assessed for COVID-19 daily. If symptoms are noticed, these symptoms must be reported to the Hope Healthline immediately. Results of the health assessment must be documented on the health screening form at least once per week.
2. All other support settings: Support recipients should be screened before receiving services each day. The direct support professional or other employee who is providing direct care services should screen them verbally before the start of services and document they completed the screening in their electronic service notes with a simple statement such as "screening completed". If the screening is not passed, services should not occur for the day and the supervisor must be notified so they can re-assign the employee as appropriate and promptly report this information to the Hope Healthline. The screening questions to be used are the same as documented in the daily health screening form used by employees.

Some support environments, such as the Behavioral Health Clinic and Discovery Center, may contact guardians, assisted living homes, or recipients to conduct a phone screening before the recipient travels to the clinic or grouped setting to receive services.

## Transportation

Transportation adds additional risk to those traveling in the same vehicle as it reduces the ability to socially distance and air flow may be minimal, especially during the winter months. The following safety practices must be followed during transportation:

1. All occupants of a vehicle should wear a mask for the duration of the ride, including employees and support recipients.
2. If a support recipient cannot tolerate a mask for the duration of the ride, they may still travel in the same vehicle with members of their assisted living home. They may not travel with other non-

household members in the same vehicle.

3. If a support recipient is sick, they should be transported in a vehicle alone with only the driver present.
4. Consider cracking or opening the windows while driving to allow for air flow throughout the vehicle.
5. Clean the surfaces and commonly touched areas of the vehicle after use.

## Vaccination

Hope respects each support recipients and/or their legal guardian's right to choose whether the recipient vaccinates or not. Vaccination is a vital tool to reduce the presence and severity of COVID-19 cases in the workplace, in communities, and in the nation as a whole. Hope strongly encourages all support recipients and employees to receive a COVID-19 vaccination to protect themselves, other employees, and those who choose our services. For more details on vaccination, see the COVID Risk Mitigation Policy.

## Testing for COVID-19

Support recipients may be requested to test for COVID-19 for a variety of situations, including but not limited to the following:

1. Recipient is experiencing symptoms
2. Exposure to someone who has symptoms, someone who is being tested for COVID-19 due to symptoms, or been exposed to someone who is COVID positive
3. After return from out-of-state travel

Testing for exposures within an assisted living home environment is directed through the Hope Healthline and often involves testing of multiple residents and employees. Testing may be brought onsite through a mobile clinic or the home may travel for testing if tolerated by residents. Testing is generally requested 72 hours after symptom onset or contact with a COVID positive person or someone showing symptoms.

Support recipients not residing in an assisted living home who live in an independent living or natural home setting with a **Low** level of protection, may have services paused until test results are returned and they are cleared by the Hope Healthline to return to services. If testing does not occur, services may pause for up to 10 days. Support recipients in these settings with a **High** or **Medium** level of protection may continue receiving services pending test results if they are not symptomatic. These recipients are still requested to test but may receive services while test results are pending.

Acceptable tests are PCR or TMA. Rapid or at-home test results are not permitted for clearance to receive services. Results from testing must be sent by the supervisor to the Hope Healthline at [hopehealthline@hopealaska.org](mailto:hopehealthline@hopealaska.org). Once results are received, the Hope Healthline will review and clear support recipients to return to services or end isolation/quarantine and will communicate this information directly with the supervisor.

## Quarantine & Clearance to Return to Services

Quarantine will occur in the following circumstances based upon a support recipient's level of protection:

1. **Low** level of protection results in quarantine when:
  - a. Support recipient is experiencing symptoms
  - b. An support recipient has been exposed to someone who has symptoms, someone who is being tested for COVID-19 due to symptoms, or been exposed to someone who is COVID positive
  - c. A support recipient has returned from out-of-state travel
2. **Medium or High** level of protection results in quarantine when:
  - a. Support recipient is experiencing symptoms

The Hope Healthline is responsible to clear support recipients for return to services from quarantine. Support recipients will be considered for clearance upon receipt of a negative test taken after 72 hours. Additionally, individuals who had symptoms will be considered for clearance after they have been fever-free for 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medication) and symptoms are improving.

## COVID Positive (+) Isolation and Clearance to Return to Services

A support recipient who receives services in the Behavioral Health Clinic, lives in a natural home environment, attends grouped activities etc. is generally not permitted to receive these services while positive for COVID-19 and on isolation.

Isolation will occur in an assisted living home when a support recipient tests positive for COVID-19. General guidelines for when a support recipient or assisted living home may receive clearance by the Hope Healthline are:

1. All levels of protection: Must isolate for at least 5 days from symptom onset or positive test if asymptomatic. May be considered for clearance after 5 days if individual is fever-free for 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medication) and symptoms are improving. Upon clearance, individual must wear a tight-fitting mask, like K95, for additional 5 days.

If wearing a tight-fitting mask cannot be tolerated by a support recipient, they were severely ill with COVID-19, or are immunocompromised, a minimum of 10 days of isolation for the individual and the ALH is required.

All support recipients must receive clearance from the Hope Healthline before returning to full services or from a quarantine or isolation status.

## **Out-Of-State Travel**

Supervisors should report to the Hope Healthline their knowledge of support recipients who will be traveling out of the State of Alaska. The policies that generally apply to a recipient's ability to return to services after out of state travel is the same as for employees for return to work, which is outlined in the COVID Risk Mitigation Policy. For residents with a Low level of protection living in an assisted living home, considerations and timeline for entry back into the home after travel earlier than 5 days after return should be discussed amongst the home alliance team.

## **Visitors to Assisted Living Homes**

Visitors are permitted in Hope facilities at this time, regardless of their level of protection as outlined above. Visitors must follow the following protocols in order to ensure the safety of the residents who reside and the employees who work in the home:

1. Schedule their visit so that proper planning in the home can occur. Assisted living homes should limit the number of simultaneous visitors in the home when possible. Visitors are asked to remain flexible with visitation times if requested to ensure each resident is able to receive visitors as desired.
2. Complete the health screening form before entry. This includes having their temperature taken at the door. If the screening form is not passed, the visitor may not enter the home.
3. Provide their information to the welcoming staff to be logged on the visitors log, which will include their name and contact information. These records will be kept with the home files for a minimum of 30 days.
4. Must wear close-fitting face mask properly at all times. K95 is recommended. Exceptions to this mask requirement includes:
  - a. When sharing a meal
  - b. When visiting outdoors
  - c. When alone in the resident's room or in a designated visitation room
5. Frequently wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds while in the home. When soap and running water are unavailable, use an alcohol-based hand rub with at least 60% alcohol.
6. Avoid touching eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands. Follow appropriate respiratory etiquette, which includes covering for coughs and sneezes.
7. Maintain six feet of social distance between persons where possible.
8. Consider outdoor visits when possible, as this poses a significantly lower risk of transmission of COVID-19 during the visit.
9. Overnight visitors will be considered on a case-by-case basis and will be approved by the home alliance team.

## Hope Gatherings

A gathering is defined as a congregation of multiple people at a Hope organized event which includes outside stakeholders such as visitors, guardians, care coordinators, or other community members. A gathering most commonly includes Hope hosted events such as birthday or graduation parties, picnics, large meetings etc. If there is a gathering of 20 or more people at one event the safeguards listed below must be put into place. These safeguards are also strongly encouraged for smaller gatherings if the size of venue and number of those anticipated to be present means limited ability to properly social distance. This policy does not apply to an individual's choice to participate in general community settings where large groups of people may gather.

Gatherings are permitted at this time, with the following safeguards in place:

1. A risk assessment must be completed by the coordinator of the gathering, including the home alliance or support team for an assisted living home. The supervisor of the environment or other designated staff will support the team in completing a risk matrix form.
2. The completed risk assessment form will be reviewed and approved by a director. The completed form will be saved in the home files or other related location. The Hope Healthline may be contacted by the supervisor or director for advice or questions, however Hope Healthline review or approval is **not** required.
3. Those attending the gathering who are not Hope employees or support recipients must show proof of vaccination, negative test taken within 24 hours before entering and joining the gathering, or proof of positive COVID test results within the last 3 months from which they have recovered. A rapid test may be provided at the door or entrance to the gathering for use. The attendee must wait for the test results to be returned before entering the gathering and can wait in their vehicle or outside weather permitting.
  - a. Proof of vaccination or testing is not required for outdoor gatherings.
4. The gathering should have a guest list and/or sign-in sheet when possible and expectations for attending must be made clear to all participants before the gathering occurs.
5. Gatherings should follow general COVID-19 safety practices as established in other policies, such as frequent hand washing, maintaining social distance of six feet or more when possible, mask wearing, screening, and following general universal precautions.

## Critical Incident Reporting

If a confirmed case of COVID-19 is reported for a support recipient, a Critical Incident Report with the State of Alaska must be filed within 24 hours. This should be filed by the supervisor who oversees the support recipient's care. An additional report will be made by Hope's Licensing staff member(s) to the State of Alaska Licensing department for any assisted living home locations that are on quarantine or isolation status.

## Confidentiality/Privacy

Except for circumstances in which Hope is legally required to report workplace occurrences of communicable disease, the confidentiality of all employee and support recipient medical conditions will be maintained in accordance with applicable law and to the extent practical under the circumstances. Hope reserves the right to inform employees or support recipients that a support recipient or employee has been diagnosed with COVID-19 if others might have been exposed to the disease, so other individuals may take measures to protect their own health.

## Resources

1. Dr. William Browner, Medical Director for Hope Community Resources, Inc.
2. US Department of Labor Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA). (2021). *Protecting Workers: Guidance on Mitigating and Preventing the Spread of COVID-19 in the Workplace*. Retrieved from: <https://www.osha.gov/coronavirus/safework>
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2021). *COVID-19 Workplaces and Businesses – Workplace Prevention Strategies*. Retrieved from: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/workplaces-businesses/index.html>
4. Alaska Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) Division of Health Care Services Residential Licensing. (2021). *COVID-19 Recommended Guidance for Congregate Residential Setting*. Retrieved from: [https://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Epi/id/SiteAssets/Pages/HumanCoV/VisitationGuidelines\\_ResidentialCongregateFacilities.pdf](https://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Epi/id/SiteAssets/Pages/HumanCoV/VisitationGuidelines_ResidentialCongregateFacilities.pdf)
5. Alaska Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS). (2022). *COVID-19 in Alaska*. Retrieved from: <https://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Epi/id/Pages/COVID-19/default.aspx>
6. State of Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOL). (2021). *COVID-19 Exposure Prevention, Preparedness, and Response Safety Plan*. Retrieved from: [https://labor.alaska.gov/lss/training/COVID-19\\_Safety\\_Plan\\_Example\\_Template.docx](https://labor.alaska.gov/lss/training/COVID-19_Safety_Plan_Example_Template.docx)