



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES
A Healthcare Service Agency

NED LAMONT
GOVERNOR

MIRIAM E. DELPHIN-RITTMON, Ph.D.
COMMISSIONER

MEMORANDUM

To: DMHAS Staff
From: Miriam E. Delphin-Rittmon, Ph.D.
Date: March 24, 2020
Subject: DMHAS COVID-19 Staff Update #7

In the midst of an infectious disease outbreak, healthcare facilities around the world are confronted with the challenge of caring for patients while protecting the health of those who care for them. To further complicate this, the nation is facing a shortage of personal protective equipment, or PPE, which is used to protect those at risk of exposure to COVID-19. This is something that healthcare providers and facilities are struggling with nationwide, including within our own DMHAS system of care.

The State of Connecticut has requested assistance from the federal government for supplies, including PPE, from the Strategic National Stockpile. The State is also working to secure PPE from other sources, including through donations and private entities. In addition to the 5,300 expired N95 masks available at Connecticut Valley Hospital (CVH), the Department of Public Health (DPH) is delivering 2,000 expired n95 masks for DMHAS use. We are seeking guidance to ensure that the use of expired masks is effective and safe for clients and staff. At this time, we also have a sufficient supply of gloves and have ordered hand sanitizer.

As these supplies come in, we will work to distribute them to our facilities as quickly as possible. Please know that we are doing all we can to provide you with equipment to help keep you healthy and safe. In addition to providing PPE, the Department also has an online comprehensive training on PPE (*Personal Protective Equipment and Hand Hygiene, Class ID: 0000105740*) available on the LMS training system. I also invite you to visit the [World Health Organization website](#) which has information and videos on how and when to use masks to prevent COVID-19.

PPE is useful in protecting healthcare workers and others, but there are guidelines for its use. The benefit of the use of surgical masks in routine clinical care is unclear and should be avoided as it could create a false sense of safety and be a source of infection. Due to the national shortage of PPE, today the Department of Public Health (DPH) issued [updated guidance on the use and conservation of PPE](#). Consistent with current [CDC guidelines](#), in addition to using surgical masks for patients with respiratory symptoms who are suspected to have or have been diagnosed with COVID-19, staff are recommended to use surgical masks when:

(860) 418-7000
410 Capitol Avenue, P.O. Box 341431, Hartford, Connecticut 06134
<https://portal.ct.gov/dmhas>
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- Screening individuals for COVID-19, including during intake of new admissions;
- Interacting with patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 infections;
- Working on a unit with patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 infection;
- Asymptomatic staff exposed to an individual suspected of having COVID-19 should wear a mask, maintain social distance of 6ft and perform hand hygiene frequently; or
- Housekeeping staff doing cleaning and disinfection of room or area with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 patient/staff.

These guidelines are an effort to not only keep staff healthy and safe, but to conserve PPE for use as we expect to see an increase in the number of cases of COVID-19. ***Staff who are healthy and/or do not provide direct care to patients with COVID-19 (with the exception of housekeeping staff cleaning and disinfecting areas with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 patient/staff) are not recommended to use PPE at this time as their level of exposure is significantly lower.***

Staff caring for patients with confirmed COVID-19 infection and housekeeping staff performing a cleaning and disinfection of a room of a confirmed COVID-19 patient/staff, should use N95 masks, face protectors, goggles and gowns. Staff may use a single mask for the entire shift. The same masks may be reused in certain circumstances.

During a time that we are being asked to physically distance ourselves from others, I understand that some of you may be anxious of being in such close proximity to others. I also understand that your concern is not only for your health, but for the health of your loved ones at home who may be older or have health conditions that put them at greater risk for serious illness from COVID-19. I am committed to your health and safety, and continue to direct all facilities to strictly adhere to guidance from DPH and CDC related to COVID-19 to maintain an environment that is healthy and safe for both the people we serve and the people who serve them.

Thank you all for continuing to provide quality and compassionate care for the people we serve and for supporting each other during this difficult time.