


To: All Lifeworks staff, families, and persons served
From: Daniel Burke, President/CEO, Lifeworks, Inc. 
Re: Updated Policies regarding Testing/ Masks
Date: June 28, 2022

This memo is to announce new, updated Lifeworks policies and protocols regarding Covid Testing Protocols and Mask Policies to be effective July 1, 2022. These changes are made in accordance with the guidelines issues by the Mass. Executive Office of Health and Human Services that are effective on July 1, 2022.

Covid Testing Protocols

Beginning on July 1, Lifeworks will discontinue our participation in the weekly PCR Testing of all congregate care programs and staff who do, or could work, in those programs. Also, our day program and administrative staff will no longer be asked to voluntarily do a rapid test weekly and report those results to their supervisors.

Instead, as of July 1, all staff and programs will be provided with a supply of rapid test kits. Our protocols will be as follows:

- We will ask that all staff and persons served, if they begin to exhibit any potential symptoms that are symptoms of Covid-19, either self-administer a rapid test or in the case of the persons served, our staff will assist them in administering rapid tests. Day Program participants should consult their location's Illness Policy and/or contact their Program Director or Nurse for further guidance.
- All staff and persons served, regardless of vaccination status, who fall under the category of "exposed but not exhibiting symptoms" must test for five days and wear a mask during this time. After the first five days from exposure, if testing remains negative, then they just need to wear a mask for five additional days. Please note that MassHealth has specific return to program policies for person served in Day Hab programs, Therefore, those persons served and their families and/or staff should communicate directly with our Day Hab program about their personal return to program plan.

Masks

The Executive Office of Health and Human Services has issued new mask guidelines as of July 1 in programs funded by the EOHHS. Essentially, for Residential programs, Employment, Community-Based Day Supports, and other DDS funded programs, the requirement of the wearing of masks by participants and staff is optional, with the use of masks up to the agency.

This rule does not apply to programs funded by MassHealth, such as the Lifeworks Day Habilitation programs, or on transportation to all day programs funded by MassHealth and EOHHS.

Therefore, the following bullets will outline the Lifeworks mask policies effective July 1. Please note that our goal is as of July 1st to provide as much flexibility as possible, while still acknowledging that since several programs have crossover services or have services such as Day Habilitation and Employment services which take place in the same building, that it is not fair or reasonable to have different rules depending on a person's funding or program in the same location.

- While indoors, the wearing of masks by staff in all day and employment programs will be required during all programming, direct, or personal care supports. Masks are optional for day program participants in all settings except for exposure or recovery protocols and transportation.
- At day program offices, in offices of 2 or more people, or in meetings that are just involving staff, masks will be optional. If the meeting involves a person we support, masks must be worn.
- The wearing of masks in each residence will be optional for each location, to be determined by Lifeworks and staff. This is except for houses that have significant medical challenges, have someone who is receiving chemotherapy or other similar medical treatment, or if there is a positive case of Covid in the house. Senior Leadership, in consultation with our Nursing Dept., reserve the right to make decisions regarding the mandatory nature of masks at any home. This will be based on either the long-term medical needs in a home, or on any short-term changes in a particular home.
- In communal areas such as lobbies, transportation loading areas, program hallways in all day and office programs, masks must be worn by all staff and guests.
- Masks must be worn at all times when providing supports that are considered universal precautions, except when showering a person due to the challenging nature of wearing a medical mask in a shower. This includes day program and residential locations.
- Masks must be worn in both directions on all LES and Day Habilitation vehicles by staff and by individuals served unless those individuals served are not medically considered capable of wearing one.
- The rules for guests, including family members and agency staff at each residence, are the same as what is in place at each individual home. This working list will be managed by the Senior Leadership team in conjunction with the Agency's Nursing Dept. with changes communicated regularly. Each residence should have their mask expectations posted, as well as communicated to their staff and visitors.

Changes to Screening Protocols

- Removal of mandatory temperature check stations in Lifeworks facilities. Lifeworks still encourages staff to regularly self-monitor for symptoms such as fevers.
- Day Program locations will discontinue the use of the daily electronic screening tool for both staff and participants. However, day programs will still be required to complete a cab duty/entry process upon arrival each day.

Test Kit Availability

Lifeworks is pleased to let you know that as we transition to the use of rapid test kits for all programs, we have an extensive inventory of these kits and have access to a large supply from the state. It is our expectation that each program, including all homes, should have a good supply of test kits on hand. Also, we want each staff member to always have 1-2 test kit boxes with them, so if you are home, traveling or otherwise and develop symptoms that resemble Covid-19, you can self-administer the test kit very quickly. We will be introducing a system of reporting the times you do utilize the kit because we need to have a reporting system for this to remain eligible for the free test kits from the state of Massachusetts.

I am sure there will be questions from all locations. We will be having a meeting with all directors and senior leadership to review these guidelines and please feel free to talk with your director and program leadership.

Please remember that Lifeworks has done a wonderful job of managing the many challenges that Covid has presented to us and much of this success has been based on being conservative and always making our policy and protocol decisions based on the information from the CDC and Mass. Dept. of Public Health, as well as prioritizing the health and safety of the people we serve and our staff.

Thanks