Purpose

This document outlines the Ministry of Health Mask Use Policy regarding the mask use by health care workers, non-clinical staff, patients and visitors in all health care facilities, programs and services, including community physician offices and outpatient clinics during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Scope

These provincial requirements apply to all health care facilities, programs and services, including community physician offices and outpatient clinics, acute care, long-term care (LTC) and assisted living (AL) settings during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Definitions

- **Medical (surgical/procedure) mask:** A medical grade face mask that meets ASTM International and ISO (or equivalent) performance requirements for bacterial filtration efficiency, particulate filtration efficiency, fluid resistance, pressure differential and skin sensitivity.

- **Must:** A mandatory requirement based on BC Ministry of Health directive.

- **Non-clinical staff:** All staff that are not providing clinical care including, but not limited to, administrative and office staff, facilities staff, contracted staff and volunteers.

Personal Protective Equipment

COVID-19 spreads mainly among people who are in close contact with one another, so the use of masks is particularly important in settings where people are close to each other or where physical distancing is difficult to maintain.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), including masks, are one part of the hierarchy of infection prevention and exposure control measures for communicable diseases. As such, PPE are supplemental to, and not replacements for, other measures on the hierarchy. These other measures include, but are not limited to:

1. Population-level measures (crowd limits, closures, quarantine/isolation, contact tracing),
2. Environmental measures (physical distancing, physical barriers, cleaning and disinfection),
3. Administrative measures (changes in work practices, decreased density), and
4. Personal measures (staying home when sick, hand hygiene).

Masks are a method of source control and are required in health care facilities as a simple barrier to help prevent respiratory droplets from traveling into the air and onto other people when the person wearing the mask coughs, sneezes, talks or raises their voice. Medical masks must be worn in adherence to the Ministry of Health Mask Use Policy, except if requested to remove their mask by a health care professional).

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Mask Requirements by Work Environment and/or User Group

Refer to the table below for mask requirements by work environment and/or user group.

Environment	Used By	Work Environment	Type of Mask
Long-Term Care/ Assisted Living Settings	Health care workers and non-clinical staff	All areas, including common areas and break rooms unless eating	A medical mask
	Visitors	Upon entering and moving around in hallways, common areas, double occupancy or multi-bed rooms but not when visiting a resident in a single bed room	A medical mask
Other Health Care Facilities and Settings where Health Care is Provided	Health care workers and non-clinical staff	All persons working in a clinical unit/setting/patient care area, including common areas and break rooms unless eating and/or drinking	A medical mask
	Visitors and persons accompanying a patient	▪ Upon entering and moving around any health care facility, including clinical and non-clinical areas ▪ In admitting/waiting areas, including Emergency Departments	A medical mask
	Patients	When entering and moving around a health care facility, including patient transport	A medical mask (except if requested to remove their mask by a health care professional)
		When admitted	A medical mask must be worn when they leave the room (except if requested to remove their mask by a health care professional)
	Use Droplet Precautions for patients who cannot or refuse to wear a mask.		
non-patient area within a health-care facility	All staff	▪ Administrative areas within acute care sites ▪ Office areas within a community site or non-health care environments ▪ Corporate offices, including the Fraser Health Central City building	mask is optional in these settings
If an administrative staff or visitors in a health care setting goes to a clinical unit/setting/patient care area or other areas where they may encounter patients (cafeteria, common hallways), they must wear a medical mask.			

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Exemptions to the Mask Use Policy

- Exemptions to the policy may need to be applied for people with certain medical conditions and/or to accommodate site-specific circumstances
- Sites should have processes and resources in place to determine exemptions, screeners to provide the initial support and guidance to those who refuse to wear a mask, and designated site administrators who will manage any escalations required
  - Determining exemptions is within the scope of the designated site administrator and is beyond the role of site screeners
- Implementing this process will require:
  - Supporting the screener role with a designated site administrator to support troubleshooting for individuals that refuse to wear a mask
  - Ensuring that for patients who require care in the facility who will not wear a mask, a mitigation plan is established to ensure care is provided
  - Promoting and supporting virtual options for visitors or patients where possible
- To ensure a consistent process is implemented across Fraser Health, excluding LTC and AL, refer to the Algorithm for Approaching Situations Where Individuals Refuse to Wear Medical Masks in Appendix A. See the Guideline to Approaching Situations Where Individuals Refuse to Wear Masks in Acute Care.
- To ensure a consistent process is implemented in LTC and AL settings, refer to the Algorithm for Approaching Situations Where Individuals Refuse to Wear Medical Masks in LTC and AL in Appendix B

Selecting and Wearing a Mask

- See the table under Mask Requirements by Work Environment and/or User Group
- Medical masks will be made available by the organization for staff and visitors, as required
- Do not wear a mask with an exhalation valve or vent, which can allow virus particles to escape
- Your mask should completely cover your nose and mouth and fit snugly against the sides of your face with no gaps. Masks with adjustable nosepieces are preferable as they can help you get a tighter fit.

Mask Hygiene

- Perform hand hygiene before putting on your mask, and before and after removing your mask. Wash with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand rub (at least 70 per cent alcohol content).
- Avoid touching your mask while wearing it – if you touch your mask, perform hand hygiene
- Replace your mask if it becomes soiled, damp or hard to breathe through
- Medical masks must not be re-used; extended use is permitted as per Fraser Health Extended Use of Surgical/Procedure Masks and Eye Protection

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Images below for DOs and DON'Ts of Wearing a Mask

Where to get a Mask

All Staff, patients and visitors will be given a medical mask, as required.

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Additional Information

For **Fraser Health only**:

- Staff and medical staff with questions about mask wearing guidelines and protocols, please email safety@fraserhealth.ca.

For **Affiliated LTC and AL sites only:**

How to Access PPE Supplies

- **Effective March 15, 2021**, PPE Support for LTC and AL sites has transitioned to the Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA).
- If your site requires PPE supplies, **please use the PHSA order form**.
- *Note: **Fraser Health Owned & Operated LTC sites** should continue to access PPE supplies through their normal supply channels.*

References

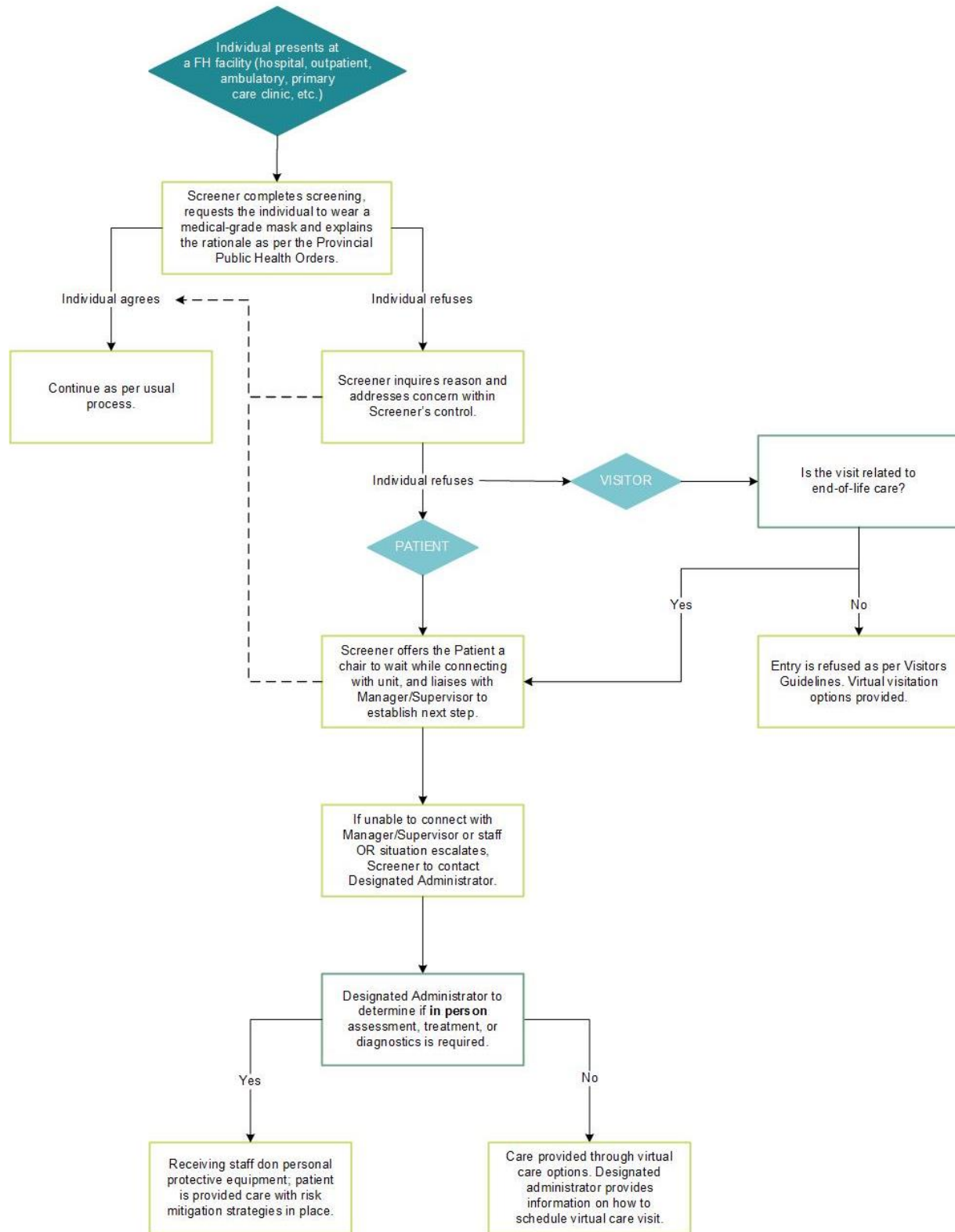Ministry of Health Mask Use in Health Care Facilities during COVID-19 – Policy Communique
BCCDC – Masks
CDC – Use of Masks to Help Slow the Spread of COVID-19

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Appendix A: Algorithm for Approaching Situations where Individuals Refuse to Wear Medical Masks

Updated as of: January 28, 2021

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Appendix B: Algorithm for Approaching Situations where Individuals Refuse to Wear Medical Masks in LTC and AL

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