

Face Protection for Housing and Shelter Staff Working in Close Contact with People with Confirmed or Suspected COVID-19 Infection

2/3/2021

Recommendations below are for individuals that work in homeless shelters, supportive housing, congregate housing like residential treatment facilities, and other housing complexes and are **in close contact (within 6 feet for 10 minutes or longer) with someone with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 infection**. Close contact also includes direct contact with an infected person's respiratory droplets or secretions. Employers and program managers can help determine what janitorial or client assistance tasks may require face protection. The recommendations are based on current [CDC guidance for healthcare workers](#), when medical masks are in short supply. The CDC frequently evaluates and updates recommendations.

Why Are These Recommendations Necessary? We are acutely aware of how the shortage of masks is causing deep concern, stress, and difficulty for many housing and shelter staff as you continue to provide essential services and care for individuals. Frontline healthcare workers in King County do not currently have enough facemasks, N95 respirators and other personal protective equipment (PPE). **Until more supplies are available, PPE must be reserved for healthcare workers.** Recommendations below do not offer the same level of protection of PPE but may help housing and shelter workers reduce their risk of infection.

Recommendations

When medical masks are in short supply, you can extend their use. Follow these guidelines:

- Take care not to touch the facemask while in use. If you touch or adjust the mask on your face, immediately wash your hands.
- Remove the mask carefully if you plan to use it again. hold the outer surface of the mask and fold so that the inner surface is not visible. Store the mask in a clean, breathable container.
- Discard the mask if it is dirty, damaged, or hard to breathe through.
- If only one mask is available, have the sick individual wear it.

When medical masks are not available, workers may use other types of masks. When selecting a mask, keep in mind that masks that have a snug fit and have two or more layers are more effective at protecting the person wearing the mask and others around them. Choose a mask that has 2-3 fabric layers, tightly woven fabric such as cotton and cotton blends that are breathable, and that provide a snug fit without gaps.

Homemade masks should be used in combination with a face shield that covers the entire front and sides of the face, extending to the chin or below. If ready-made face shields are unavailable, they can be homemade. Here is a [video for making face shields](#). Do not share your shield with other workers, residents or clients. If manufacturer instructions for cleaning and disinfecting face shields are unavailable, consider the following steps for cleaning after each use:

- While wearing gloves, carefully *wipe the inside, followed by the outside* of the face shield, using a clean cloth saturated with neutral detergent solution or cleaner wipe.
- Carefully wipe the *outside* of the face shield using a wipe or clean cloth saturated with [EPA-registered hospital disinfectant solution](#). If disinfectant solution is not available, dispose of the face shield after use.
- Wipe the outside of face shield with clean water or alcohol to remove residue.
- Air dry or dry with clean absorbent towels.
- Remove gloves and wash hands.