



Health Services
LOS ANGELES COUNTY

March 27, 2020

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Katarina del Valle Thompson, RN
SEIU 721 Chief Negotiator, Registered Nurses 311-312
Director Member Education and Training
1545 Wilshire Blvd
Los Angeles, CA 90017
katarina.thompson@seiu721.org

RE: SAFETY OF ALL STAFF

Dear Ms. del Valle Thompson,

Thank you and the SEIU 721 RN members for meeting with Department of Health Services (DHS) leadership last week. We listened carefully and appreciated the valuable feedback from DHS' nurses regarding the need for enhanced communication within DHS facilities, how to improve care delivery, and importantly ensuring safety of all staff in response to COVID-19. Now more than ever, it is important that we keep our lines of communication open with SEIU 721 (SEIU) and between our nurses and our nurse leaders.

We look forward to the initiation of the daily meetings we discussed, as well as on-going communications with SEIU. We had hoped to meet again this week to follow-up on our discussions regarding the use of masks which is why we sent out an invitation to meet today, so that we could share our plans for addressing the important concerns that SEIU has raised. We realize that you and your team are as busy as we are, so because our schedules didn't align, we wanted to provide you with an update of the actions DHS is taking to address SEIU's concerns about staff safety.

First, we issued a policy this week allowing surgical masks for any employee who wants to wear a mask. Second, DHS will be issuing a policy today expanding the use of N95 respirator usage to support healthcare workers whose activities may generate above minimal risk exposures. This expansion will include the ICU level of care, the OR/ED during a patient's intubation and for healthcare workers involved in procedures manipulating a patient's airway. DHS will also support the optional use of a N95 respirator by a healthcare worker for the workday outside of these areas, upon request. Attached, please find the guidance regarding surgical masks and the guidance that is being released to all staff today regarding N95 respirators. We will continue the careful monitoring of PPE supplies and these usages may be modified depending on the trajectory of critical supplies.

Christina R. Ghaly, M.D.
Director

Hal F. Yee, Jr., M.D., Ph.D.
Chief Deputy Director, Clinical Affairs

313 N. Figueroa Street, Suite 909
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Tel: (213) 288-7989
Fax: (213) 481-0505

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Please convey to your members that these actions were shaped by our dialogue with SEIU and the professional concerns raised by DHS nurses. DHS also very much appreciates the efforts of SEIU's Chief of Staff Gilda Valdez who connected DHS to new supply chains of N95 respirators. These respirators have been ordered and shipment is anticipated within 7-14 days. DHS Supply Chain is aggressively sourcing supply leads and ordering supplies to support DHS' readiness efforts. DHS also continues to advocate for the increased availability of PPE in the supply chain that is needed for DHS and all California hospitals to alleviate critical shortages.

Please let us know if you have any questions and we look forward to our continued discussions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Hal F. Yee, Jr.", is positioned above the typed name.

Hal F. Yee, Jr., M.D., Ph.D.
Chief Deputy Director, Clinical Affairs

HFY:mm

Attachments



Surgical Mask Announcement

Effective: 3-24-2020



Purpose:

To further protect both patients and staff from other patients and staff that may shed virus and lead to unknown exposures in the workplace.

Procedure:

In an abundance of caution and to add a further protection for staff and patients, the DHS Infection Prevention & Control (IPC) group in conjunction with the COVID-19 Oversight Committee recommend the following:

- Employees, at their own discretion, are permitted to wear a surgical mask in any clinical area of a hospital or clinic, at any time.
- This is NOT mandatory. Staff members may choose not to don a mask unless PPE is an expected practice
- The surgical mask can be used for an entire shift and between patients.
- All staff are **always** required to continue proper hand hygiene (i.e. before and after entering the patient care environment).

Employees should continue to:

- Don an N95 mask while providing care for any patient in airborne precaution including Patient Under Investigation (PUI) for whom an aerosol-generating procedure will be performed, as per existing policy.
- Remove surgical mask and discard upon leaving a patient room that is identified as Contact Precaution (i.e., all PUI and known COVID-19 positive patients).
- Continue following other appropriate PPE as identified in policies and procedures.

Employees should NOT bring any mask from outside to be used in the hospital. This includes cloth or homemade as well as store-bought masks. They may not afford the same level of protection as DHS surgical masks.

DHS teams are reassessing things daily, and we appreciate your understanding as we continue to adapt to the ongoing challenges during the COVID-19 outbreak.



Health Services
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Expanded Use of N95 Respiratory in Certain Clinical Circumstances



Date: 03/27/20

Purpose:

This document is intended to provide further guidance on the use of N95 for Health Care Workers (HCW). Given recent increasing numbers of community spread, this revised practice will support HCWs whose activities may generate above minimal risk exposures.

Procedure:

Monitoring and adapting use of N95 respirators has been a priority in DHS. We have adhered to guidance provided by Los Angeles County DPH, California DPH, and by Centers for Disease Control (CDC). This includes the CDC guidance on prolonged use and reuse of N95. Adapting to the ongoing situations we recommend the following changes to our current guidance*:

- HCWs providing ICU level of care to patients have some increased levels of exposure due to unexpected events such as ventilator disconnections or as a result of procedures including nebulized treatments and/or at risk for sudden declines in respiratory status. As such, an N95 respirator may be used when caring for these patients out of abundance of caution.
- HCWs involved in the OR/ED: During a patient's intubation, all HCWs will don an N95 respirator for non-PUI and non-COVID-19 patients considering the small but increasing risk of asymptomatic or early symptomatic patients presenting to these areas.
 - Note: If negative pressure rooms are available, they can be considered for use during intubation.
- HCWs involved in performing procedures manipulating the patient's airway (including endoscopies) or thoracic surgery that generate aerosols should don an N95 respirator.
- If entering a room requiring N95 respirator to be discarded after patient care, the HCW may obtain a fresh mask to replace the discarded mask from their current location.
- All the below criteria must still be applied.

Employees will continue to:

- Don an N95 mask while providing care for any patients in Airborne Precaution for other indications such as tuberculosis, measles, etc.
- When caring for patients already identified as PUIs or COVID-19 positive, HCWs should don N95 an respirator as required for any procedures that generate aerosols.



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- For patients currently in Contact Precautions for other reasons, if an N95 respirator is used, it must be discarded on completion of care and exiting a patient's room (i.e., all PUI and known COVID-19 positive patients).
- Continue the reuse policy as documented in COVID-19 Respiratory Protections document.
- Continue proper hand hygiene, i.e., before and after entering the patient care environment.
- Continue following other appropriate PPE as identified in policies and procedures.

Employees will NOT:

- Bring any mask from outside to be used in the hospital.
- Should not place a surgical mask over N95 respirator, as this may damage the mask or break the seal leading to increased risk for the HCW wearing N95 respirator.

*If any HCW feels that it is essential for them to practice while wearing an N95 respirator, they will go to the nursing office at their institution and be provided with a daily N95 respirator. For ambulatory care locations, you will need to discuss with your local leadership.

DHS teams are reassessing the situation daily, and we appreciate your understanding as we continue to adapt to the ongoing challenges during the COVID-19 outbreak.