



STATE OF MICHIGAN

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

LANSING

GRETCHEN WHITMER  
GOVERNOR

ROBERT GORDON  
DIRECTOR

August 26, 2020

Area Agency on Aging Directors,  
Commission on Aging/Counsel on Aging, and  
Area Agency on Aging Association of Michigan,

Re: DCW Face Covering/Mask Use During COVID-19

Dear Home Care Providers and Professional Direct Care Workers:

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) recently learned that some professional direct care workers (DCW) are not wearing face coverings/masks while providing home- and community-based supports and services in the homes of older adults and persons with disabilities during this COVID-19 pandemic. Older adults and persons with disabilities are highly susceptible to the virus. This group accounts for over 80 percent of the COVID-19-related deaths.

DCWs who work through an agency, and either work for more than one individual, **or** work for individuals who are not members of their household, must comply with the Governor's Executive Order 2020-161 (EO 2020-161). This executive order requires all workers to wear face coverings/masks while working. DCWs must remain vigilant in wearing face coverings/masks and other personal protective equipment to contain the spread of COVID-19 and save the lives of the individuals they serve.

MDHHS understands that wearing a mask while providing services can be difficult. We encourage DCWs to periodically take small, five-minute breaks during their shifts by going outside and removing the face covering/mask. Before doing this, please be sure the person being cared for will be safe while their aide is outside. DCWs must also check with employers about whether this time will be counted as paid time. Not all employers allow paid breaks, even during COVID-19. If the individual being cared for is on the Home Help program, breaks will need to be off the clock since Home Help does not offer paid breaks.

Please remember that face coverings/masks and the clothes worn while providing supports should be changed or washed after each use, especially after providing supports to individuals with COVID-19.

If you are an employer of DCWs, please provide a copy of this letter to each DCW on staff. Page two of this letter provides definitions and links to useful documents.

We must work together to contain COVID-19 while we wait for a vaccine to be approved. If you have any questions, please contact Jen Hunt at [huntj15@michigan.gov](mailto:huntj15@michigan.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joneigh Khaldun".

Dr. Joneigh Khaldun, MD, MPH, FACEP  
Chief Medical Executive  
Chief Deputy Director for Health

## Definitions, Information, and Resources

- **Professional Direct care workers (DCWs)** include direct support professionals, home health assistants/aides, Home Help providers, personal care assistants, and certified nursing assistants employed by provider agencies. They assist with activities of daily living (ADLs), and instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs) in a home setting, adult foster care home, home for the aged, assisted living facility, or long-term care facility.
- Governor's Executive Order No. 2020- 161 *Safeguards to protect Michigan's workers from COVID-19* [https://www.michigan.gov/whitmer/0,9309,7-387-90499\\_90705-535196-,00.html](https://www.michigan.gov/whitmer/0,9309,7-387-90499_90705-535196-,00.html)
- Recommendations for in-home direct care workers and methods to assure a face-to-face visit is needed. <https://www.michigan.gov/coronavirus/>; Go to "Resources", then "For Health Professionals"
- *A Phased Approach to Resuming Standard Operations--For Case Management and Other Home and Community-Based Services* [https://www.mi//chigan.gov/documents/mdhhs/Reopening\\_Case\\_Management\\_and\\_HC\\_BS.Final.071320\\_696500\\_7.pdf](https://www.mi//chigan.gov/documents/mdhhs/Reopening_Case_Management_and_HC_BS.Final.071320_696500_7.pdf)
- *Face Coverings—Frequently Asked Questions* [https://www.michigan.gov/documents/coronavirus/Face\\_Coverings\\_Guidance\\_for\\_non-healthcare\\_workers\\_Final\\_685949\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/coronavirus/Face_Coverings_Guidance_for_non-healthcare_workers_Final_685949_7.pdf)
- Direct care workers who are providing behavioral health services should also follow the additional guidance found at: <https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/BHDDACOV19>.