**Epidemic and Pandemic Procedures – Infection Control**

**Prevention**

The most important effort in infection control is prevention. Staff at Welcome House receive initial and ongoing training in infection control procedures. In addition to practicing infection control precautions staff also assist and encourage the individuals they support to practice the precautions.

1. Cover coughs and sneezes – cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw used tissues in a lined trash can. Immediately wash your hands or, if not able, use hand sanitizer with 60% alcohol. If tissues are not readily available, try to cough or sneeze into your sleeve.
2. Avoid sharing personal household items. Everyone should avoid sharing dishes, drinking glasses, cups, utensils, towels or bedding with other people. After using these items, they should be washed thoroughly with soap and water.
3. Clean all high-touch surfaces every day. This includes counters, table tops, door knobs, bathroom fixtures, keyboards and mouses, toilets, remote controls, light fixtures, etc. Use a household cleaning spray or wipes according to the label instructions. If a cleaner is not available, use a diluted bleach solution. To make a bleach solution add 1 tablespoon of bleach to 1 quart (4 cups) of water.
4. Wash laundry thoroughly.
   1. Hold soiled laundry away from your body.
   2. Immediately remove and wash clothes or bedding that have blood, body fluids and/or secretions or excretions on them.
   3. Wear disposable gloves while handling soiled items. Wash your hands immediately after removing your gloves.
   4. Read and follow directions on labels of laundry or clothing items and detergent. In general, wash and dry with the warmest temperatures recommended on the clothing label.

1. Place all used gloves, gowns, facemasks, and other contaminated items in a lined container before disposing them with other household waste. Wash your hands immediately after handling these items.
2. Wear gloves, when it can be reasonably anticipated that contact with blood or other potentially infectious materials, mucous membranes, non-intact skin, potentially contaminated skin or contaminated equipment could occur.
   1. Gloves are not a substitute for hand hygiene.
   2. If your task requires gloves, perform hand hygiene prior to donning gloves.
   3. Perform hand hygiene immediately after removing gloves.
   4. Change gloves and perform hand hygiene during individual care, if gloves become damaged, visibly soiled with blood or body fluids following a task, and when moving from work on a soiled body site to a clean body site on the same person.
   5. Never wear the same pair of gloves in the care of more than one person.
   6. Carefully remove gloves to prevent hand contamination.
3. All individuals served and staff are strongly encouraged to get the flu shot every year. The Medical Care Coordinators will facilitate flu shots for all individuals. People served who are over the age of 60 are assisted to obtain the pneumonia vaccine as recommended.
4. Staff are asked not to come to work if they have symptoms of any possible infectious illness (i.e. influenza).

**Monitoring and Addressing Symptoms of Illness**

Individuals are routinely monitored for signs and symptoms of illness. When staff observe symptoms they refer to the medical manual for protocols for common illnesses (vomiting, diarrhea, fever). The instructions indicate under what circumstances a nurse should be contacted or the individual should be seen by a doctor. Per the CDC, signs of infectious diseases include:

* Fever (this is sometimes the only sign of an infection).
* Chills and sweats.
* Change in cough or a new cough.
* Sore throat or new mouth sore.
* Shortness of breath.
* Nasal congestion.
* Stiff neck.
* Burning or pain with urination.
* Unusual vaginal discharge or irritation.
* Increased urination.
* Redness, soreness, or swelling in any area, including surgical wounds and ports.
* Diarrhea.
* Vomiting.
* Pain in the abdomen or rectum.
* New onset of pain.

If an individual shows common signs of infectious illnesses staff will make an effort to isolate the person from others in the home (encourage them to stay in their room, eat separately when possible, etc.). Disinfecting is a daily routine with the frequency being increased when there are signs of infection. Staff will encourage all of the individuals in the site to drink plenty of fluids, wash hands frequently, and cover their coughs.

**Epidemic Procedures**

If multiple individuals (clients and/or staff) in a site begin to show symptoms, the leadership staff with assistance from nursing and other support staff will consider the following steps:

* Follow nursing or physician instructions for use of over the counter medications to treat symptoms.
* Consider testing for influenza or other illnesses.
* Consider keeping all individuals home from work, day programs, and community outings until symptoms subside.
* As much as possible, avoid sharing staff with other sites.
* Consider major disinfecting of the site.
* If there are multiple cases in a day program the administration may consider closing to disinfect and avoid cross contamination.
* Staff will use PPE as appropriate (gloves, masks, gowns).
* Follow any other recommendations from the local health department or CDC.

**Pandemic Procedures**

Should there be a larger area wide epidemic or a pandemic the Emergency Response Team under leadership of the Associate Director will meet frequently to coordinate the agency response. The exact response will depend on the recommendations from agencies including Department of Developmental Disabilities, Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control. The functions of the team will include:

* Provide training on infection control and other procedures for staff.
* Communicate/coordinate with the County DD Board, Local Health Board and other key agencies.
* Communicate most current information and updates regularly to staff.
* Communicate prevention strategies and pandemic responses to guardians and families.
* Secure and disseminate supplies such as PPE, cleaning products, etc.
* Assess needs of individuals and provide additional supports as needed (i.e. social stories, mask assessments, counseling, etc.).
* Complete surge planning to prepare for possible outbreaks, staffing shortages, testing, immunization, etc.
* Ensure that the agency is following all guidelines and mandates while continuing the daily operations of the agency.

If community isolation is recommended the agency will make every effort to maintain safe protocols while also respecting the rights of the individuals we serve. A committee will be formally put in place to consider requests for exceptions to the pandemic plan restrictions and to address partial opening in the community.  The committee will meet on an as needed basis with the general process:

* Leadership staff will submit requests to either a committee member.
* The committee will review the requests, taking into consideration an individual’s risk factors, ability to social distance, roommate, and the situation into which they are asking to go.  For example, if it is home with family, how many family, have they been isolating, etc.
* We may go back to the staff member requesting the exception requesting additional information.
* Following our meeting, we will send an email to the residential coordinator/manager and director with a detailed reason about why the decision was made.
* If the request is approved, the parameters and safety requirements will also be details.
* If additional information is needed, that will be communicated.
* The committee will maintain a spreadsheet with each exception granted.

**Specific Procedures**

1. **Hand Hygiene**
   1. Wash with soap and water when:
      1. When hands are visibly soiled
      2. Before and after donning disposable gloves
      3. Before and after providing hands-on care (dressing, bathing, tooth brushing, shaving, etc.)
      4. After using the toilet or assisting an individual in the bathroom or changing disposable or soiled undergarments
      5. Before and after treating a cut or wound
      6. Before, during and after preparing food
      7. Before eating or assisting an individual with eating
      8. After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
      9. After handling garbage
      10. After handling dirty laundry
      11. After performing cleaning tasks
   2. Hand sanitizer should not be used as a replacement for hand washing. It can be used when water is not readily available.
   3. The CDC recommends when washing your hands with soap and water:
      1. When cleaning your hands with soap and water, wet your hands first with water, apply the amount of product recommended by the manufacturer to your hands, and rub your hands together vigorously for at least 15 seconds, covering all surfaces of the hands and fingers.
      2. Rinse your hands with water and use disposable towels to dry. Use towel to turn off the faucet.
      3. Avoid using hot water, to prevent drying of skin
   4. When using alcohol based hand sanitizer:
      1. Put product on hands and rub hands together
      2. Cover all surfaces until hands feel dry
      3. This should take around 20 seconds
2. **Procedure when individual experiences possible symptoms:**
3. **Implement contact isolation procedures and isolate the affected individual in their bedroom**
   * Ensure signage indicating visitors are prohibited at this time
   * Hang signage reminding staff about necessary precautions.
   * Ensure social distancing by separating the sick person from the rest of the household through isolation to their bedroom
   * If there are not multiple bathrooms available, each time the individual uses the bathroom it will have to be completely disinfected.  Make sure to clean all surfaces (door knobs, faucet, sink, toilet, shower chair, lift, etc.)
   * Provide good airflow in the rest of the home by opening windows (weather permitting)
   * Require the sick person to wear a face mask when leaving their bedroom (i.e., to use the bathroom)
   * Avoid sharing household items with the sick person (i.e., dishes, glasses, utensils, bedding, towels, etc.)
   * The sick person should eat/be fed in their bedroom. Use disposable food service items (i.e. plastic silverware, paper plates) If disposable food service items are not available, non-disposable food service items should be handled with gloves and washed with hot water or in a dishwasher. Properly wash hands after handling used food service items.
   * Dedicate a lined trash can for the sick person. Use gloves when removing garbage bags, handling and disposing of trash. Wash hands after handling or disposing of trash.
   * When handling dirty laundry, wear cloves and hold the laundry away from your body.  Place the laundry in a trash bag to carry to the washer.  Throw the trash bag away.  Be sure to complete thorough hand washing after handling laundry.
   * Whenever possible, staff should maintain a 6 ft. distance when interacting with the sick person; if close contact is required, available PPE must be worn.
4. **Roommate/Housemate Protocol**
   * Roommate/Housemate(s) should be quarantined away from the sick person and in the home due to likely exposure
   * Roommate/Housemate(s) should use a separate bathroom.
   * Monitor the roommate/housemate(s) and staff daily for any development of symptoms using checklist provided (checklist will be specific to the current risk).
5. **Cleaning and Disinfecting Procedures** 
   * Sick person’s isolated space
     + Per CDC guidelines, reduce cleaning and disinfection of bedrooms/bathrooms used by sick persons to only soiled items and surfaces as needed to avoid unnecessary contact with the sick person. (See Appendix A)
     + Wear disposable gloves when handling dirty laundry from an sick person and discard after each use. Laundry should not be shaken to avoid the possibility of dispersing the virus through the air.
     + Place all laundry from sick person into a garbage bag; discard the garbage bag and place a new one in the sick person’s room after clothes have been removed to be laundered.
   * Common areas
     + Focus on cleaning and disinfecting common areas where staff/roommates may or may have come into contact with the sick person.
     + Follow Welcome House directive of 4x per day and document accordingly on the cleaning checklist for the home.
     + Put discarded protective equipment or supplies in trash and only handle the bag when gloved and prepared
       - When full or needing discarding tie the bag and take immediately to outside trash bin
6. **Bathroom Protocol**
   * When a separate bathroom is available:
     + Other members of the household not exhibiting symptoms will be required to use the other bathroom.
   * When a separate bathroom is NOT available:
     + The bathroom should be cleaned and disinfected after each use by all persons.
7. **How to ensure cross contamination is minimized**
   * Limit staff interacting with the sick person
     + Consider remote supports, 2-way walkie-talkies or baby monitors where allowed for remote monitoring
     + Limit close contact with the sick person whenever possible
   * Limit staff assignments to a single home. Individuals who typically work in multiple homes risk spread to other locations. See staff scenario to determine process for determining assignment location
8. **Staff Scenario**
9. **Staff Showing No Signs of Sickness**

* Individuals will continue to be advised to self-monitor for symptoms as a matter of standard protocol.
* Employees are required to follow all proper procedures related to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
* Employees are expected to report to work but MUST continue to self-monitor their symptoms on health screening form and take temperatures.
* Logs should be kept for each employee assigned to a location by supervision

1. **Staff Showing Signs of Sickness**

* In accordance with CDC guidelines, sick employees (defined as presenting with a fever of greater than 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit with other respiratory symptoms such as a cough or shortness of breath) will be required to seek and follow advice from their PCP.
  + If at home, do not report to work and contact your PCP or a telehealth physician immediately.
  + If at work:
    - Complete the Weekly Fever & Symptom log
    - Contact your supervisor immediately to ensure coverage of your assigned consumer
    - Go home and contact your PCP or a telehealth physician immediately
  + Supervision must report the change in a staff member’s symptoms to the Welcome House Nurse and HR immediately.
* In situations of a staff member being identified as having been exposed or diagnosed with COVID-19, the treating physician’s guidelines and any resulting instruction provided by Department of Health will be followed.
* Program Director will alert family members and guardians.

1. **Return to Work**

* Individuals who develop symptoms as a result of potential exposure either at or outside of work may not report to work and will follow the guidelines set forth below for return to work
  + Employees may only return based on the following CDC guidelines:
    - If the employee was not tested:
    - They have had no fever for at least 72 hours (three full days of no fever without the use of medicine that reduces fevers), AND
    - Other symptoms have improved (i.e., cough or shortness of breath), AND
    - At least 7 days have passed since the onset of the symptoms first appeared.
  + If the employee was tested:
    - They have had no fever for at least 72 hours (three full days of no fever without the use of medicine that reduces fevers), AND
    - Other symptoms have improved (i.e., cough or shortness of breath), AND
    - The employee received two negative tests in a row, 24 hours apart in accordance with the primary care physician following CDC guidelines.

Employees must communicate with and be cleared to return to work by Human Resources prior to returning to a site

1. **Personal Protective Equipment**

**Gloves**

* Put on before entering room, remove and discard after removal of all other PPE after leaving room
* Trash can will be provided outside the room – can be discarded with normal trash – no special procedures needed – wear gloves when removing trash bag, tie and place directly into outside garbage can

**Masks**

* If possible, consumers who are sick should wear a basic mask when staff are working with them – homemade masks or even a bandana is better than nothing
* Staff working with a sick consumer who is wearing a mask need only a basic mask themselves – not an N95
  + Basic masks may be reused in the same way as an N95 – see below
* If a sick consumer cannot or will not wear a mask:
  + Staff providing services should wear gloves, a N95 mask, a face shield, and a gown (if available)

**Face Shields**

* A face shield prolongs the life of the N95 by preventing surface contamination
* Face shields should not be share; if issued, write your name on it and keep it separated from others once used
* Face shields are to be sanitized after exiting the room of an infected consumer
  + Wash with soap and water to remove any fluids if needed
  + Wipe with disinfecting wipe or spray and wipe with disposable towel

**Gowns**

* Gowns cannot be re-used at this point – remove and discard – very carefully if soiled – after leaving contact with infected consumer

**N95 Respirator Masks**

The N95 can be reused – especially if used along with a shield in patient care settings:

* Clean hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer before and after touching or adjusting the mask (if necessary for comfort or to maintain fit).
* Avoid touching the inside of the mask. If contact is made with the inside of the mask, perform hand hygiene as described above.
* Remove and place mask in a paper bag to dry after exiting the room with the infected consumer
* Masks will NOT degrade through extended use if properly cared for
* Discard a mask that is damaged or soiled by an infected person’s fluids

1. **How to Clean and Disinfect:**

**Surfaces**

* Wear disposable gloves when cleaning and disinfecting surfaces. Gloves should be discarded after each cleaning. If reusable gloves are used, those gloves should be dedicated for cleaning and disinfection of surfaces for COVID-19 and should not be used for other purposes. Consult the manufacturer’s instructions for cleaning and disinfection products used. Clean hands immediately after gloves are removed.
* If surfaces are dirty, they should be cleaned using a detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.
* For disinfection, diluted household bleach solutions, alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol, and most common EPA-registered household disinfectants should be effective.
  + Diluted household bleach solutions can be used if appropriate for the surface. Follow manufacturer’s instructions for application and proper ventilation. Check to ensure the product is not past its expiration date. Never mix household bleach with ammonia or any other cleanser. Unexpired household bleach will be effective against coronaviruses when properly diluted.
    - Prepare a bleach solution by mixing:
      * 5 tablespoons (1/3rd cup) bleach per gallon of water or
      * 4 teaspoons bleach per quart of water
  + Products with EPA-approved emerging viral pathogens claims are expected to be effective against COVID-19 based on data for harder to ksick viruses. Follow the manufacturer’s instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., concentration, application method and contact time, etc.).
* For soft (porous) surfaces such as carpeted floor, rugs, and drapes, remove visible contamination if present and clean with appropriate cleaners indicated for use on these surfaces. After cleaning:
  + Launder items as appropriate in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions. If possible, launder items using the warmest appropriate water setting for the items and dry items completely, or
  + Use products with the EPA-approved emerging viral pathogens claims that are suitable for porous surfaces.

##### Clothing, towels, linens and other items that go in the laundry

* Wear disposable gloves when handling dirty laundry from a sick person and then discard after each use. If using reusable gloves, those gloves should be dedicated for cleaning and disinfection of surfaces for COVID-19 and should not be used for other household purposes. Clean hands immediately after gloves are removed.
  + If no gloves are used when handling dirty laundry, be sure to wash hands afterwards.
  + If possible, do not shake dirty laundry. This will minimize the possibility of dispersing virus through the air.
  + Launder items as appropriate in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions. If possible, launder items using the warmest appropriate water setting for the items and dry items completely. Dirty laundry from an sick person can be washed with other people’s items.
  + Clean and disinfect clothes hampers according to guidance above for surfaces. If possible, consider placing a bag liner that is either disposable (can be thrown away) or can be laundered.