

COVID19 Hot Topics for Independent Living: Who Should be Wearing Masks in IL?

Life Plan Communities, along with other non-regulated aging services providers, are interpreting the recent CDC guidance to all Americans regarding the wearing of masks in public. Members are taking a variety of approaches to encourage residents and staff in IL to protect their own health and minimize risk of infection.

LeadingAge offers the following “Hot Topic” on who should be wearing masks in IL, drawing on guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), as well as best practices in the field.

How LPCs and Similar Providers are answering the question of wearing masks in IL:

1. **What Should We Say to IL Residents, if...? :**
 - **... the IL resident reports no symptoms of COVID19, and is going out in public:** LPCs and other members are providing education to residents about the CDC guidance to wear cloth masks, “especially in areas of high community based transmission.” Some members are requiring that asymptomatic residents wear cloth masks whenever they leave their residences.
 - **... the IL resident reports no symptoms, and is permitted into Assisted Living:** Mask-wearing requirements and visitor permissions in Assisted Living vary greatly between states and member organizations. At a minimum, if an IL resident is permitted entry into Assisted Living, members are checking symptoms and requiring that either a cloth or surgical mask be worn.
 - **... the IL resident reports no symptoms, and is permitted into the Nursing Home:** Under special circumstances, such as an end-of-life visit, if an IL resident is permitted entry into the Nursing Home, per CMS guidance, they are checked for symptoms and required to wear the appropriate PPE.
 - **... the IL resident reports COVID 19 symptoms or has a confirmed diagnosis:** In addition to requiring that the IL resident stay at home under self-quarantine, if the resident is at home, some members are requiring that the resident wear a surgical or N95 mask if any staff member is making a delivery or otherwise approaches their residence.
2. **What Should We Say to Staff Members Who Work in IL?**
 - Many LPC and similar members have educated staff on the appropriate use of PPE and have provided items such as gloves, face shields, and facemasks to IL staff members.
 - Some members allow staff to wear homemade cloth masks; some member residents have even sown these masks expressly to give to staff.
 - Most members are reserving surgical and N95 masks for exclusive use with confirmed COVID19 cases in their Assisted Living or Nursing Home.
3. **How are Member Organizations Ensuring Reusable Cloth Masks are Clean?**
 - **For IL Residents:** Some LPC member organizations are providing, and cleaning, reusable cloth masks daily. For example, one community delivers a clean mask to IL residents in the morning when meals are delivered; in the evening, residents leave ‘used’ masks on the floor or door of their apartment for pick up by staff. Other communities are ensuring that residents have access to the CDC guidance for cleaning and reuse of cloth masks.

- **For Staff Members:** As above, some LPCs are providing and cleaning cloth masks for staff who work in IL, and/or giving staff the CDC guidance for cleaning and reusing cloth masks.

As the coronavirus pandemic and response continues to evolve, new and updated resources for all aging services providers will be posted to www.leadingage.org/COVID19. Please visit frequently to get the latest news and updates.