



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
WILLIAM BEAUMONT ARMY MEDICAL CENTER  
18511 Highlander Medics Street  
Fort Bliss, TX 79918

MCHM-MZA

15 March 2023

MEMORANDUM FOR SEE DISTRIBUTION

SUBJECT: Eighth Amended Command Policy No. 17 – Face Covering and Social Distancing Requirements

1. PURPOSE. To provide guidance on the recommendation for hospital staff to practice social distancing and to wear a face covering to prevent the transmission of the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19).

2. REFERENCES.

a. Consolidated Department of Defense Coronavirus Disease 2019 Force Health Protection Guidance Revision 4, 30 January 2023.

b. Memorandum, DHA, 16 February 2023, Subject: Guidance on Coronavirus Disease 2019 for MTFs.

c. CDC guidance: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/infection-control-recommendations>.

3. APPLICABILITY. This policy applies to all military, civilian, contract staff and volunteers under the control of the El Paso Market and WBAMC, as well as patients and family members who enter an El Paso Market or WBAMC facility.

4. DEFINITION.

Face Covering/Mask: Defined as a close-fitting protective face covering of cloth, or other material, a surgical mask, or similar commercial face coverings. Individuals must consistently use a mask that covers the nose and mouth and that complies with all current guidelines from the CDC and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. Novelty or non-protective masks, masks with ventilation valves, or face shields are not authorized as a substitute for masks.

5. POLICY.

a. WBAMC staff will continue to execute social distancing and hand hygiene in accordance with guidance from the CDC and in accordance with the DoD memorandum to stop the spread of COVID-19. The wearing of face coverings does not negate the requirement to maintain social distancing and practice good hand hygiene. Social distancing should be practiced in combination with other everyday preventive actions to reduce the spread of COVID-19, including wearing masks, avoiding touching your face with unwashed hands, and frequently washing your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

b. WBAMC patients and visitors will abide by CDC guidelines. Face masks should not be placed on children under age 2 years, anyone who cannot wear one safely, or anyone who is unconscious or is incapacitated. Patients and visitors should wear their own well-fitting form of

MCHM-MZA

SUBJECT: Command Policy No. 17 – Face Covering and Social Distancing Requirements

source control (face mask) upon arrival to and throughout their stay in the facility in the following situations:

- (1) They have suspected or confirmed SARS-CoV-2 infection or other respiratory infection (e.g. those with runny nose, cough, sneeze, fever)
- (2) They had close contact with someone with SARS-CoV-2 infection for 10 days after their exposure
- (3) They reside on a unit or area of the facility experiencing a SARS-CoV-2 outbreak
- (4) They have otherwise had source control recommended by public health

authorities

c. Patient Care Activities.

(1) WBAMC staff providing direct patient care to patients with suspected or confirmed SARS-CoV-2 infection, or involved in aerosol-generating or otherwise high risk patient care interventions will wear an N95 respirator or a WBAMC Industrial Health approved equivalent in accordance with the most current CDC guidelines. N95 respirators shall be worn in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions for use. Staff who are unable to wear an N95 or equivalent respirator as required for their stated duties must be evaluated for exemption by Occupational Health.

(2) WBAMC staff providing patient care other than that described in para 5.c (1) shall mask per individual and patient risk. WBAMC staff should also use source control with the use of a well-fitting mask in departments that are experiencing an outbreak or as directed under the return to work protocol. Additional PPE should be used as recommended based on established transmission-based precautions.

d. Contact Tracing.

(1) The contact tracing is a medical evaluation and any negative consequences to personnel identified during a contact tracing has the very real possibility of placing a "chilling effect" on personnel providing full disclosure. Having honest and complete information during contact tracings is critical to limiting COVID-19 spread among our staff and patients.

(2) Leaders will maintain the sanctity of contact tracings and not use any contact tracing information for the punitive or control purposes of this Command Policy. In addition, leaders who are determined to have used contact tracing information for punitive actions will, themselves, be subject to administrative or UCMJ action.

6. This policy is punitive. Persons subject to the UCMJ may be punished according to its provisions for violation or face adverse administrative action. Persons not subject to the UCMJ may face administrative sanctions for violating the provisions.

MCHM-MZA

SUBJECT: Command Policy No. 17 – Face Covering and Social Distancing Requirements

7. Individuals subject to this policy have the duty to know and understand this policy's provisions, as well as applicable provisions of Fort Bliss and local authority public health orders.

8. The point of contact for this policy is Infection Prevention and Control at (915) 742-9695.



BRETT H. VENABLE  
COL, MS  
Commanding

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