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Labor and Industries and the Pharmacy Quality Assurance Commission Joint COVID-19 Safety Guidance and Reminder

INTRODUCTION

The Pharmacy Quality Assurance Commission's (PQAC, commission) [mission](#) is to protect and promote public health, safety, and welfare in the practice of pharmacy. As the rise in transmission of the COVID-19 virus continues, accompanied by increased demand for seasonal and COVID-19 vaccinations, it has confirmed the need for a reminder and further guidance on key measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and ensure both patient and employee safety.

This joint COVID-19 Safety Guidance and Reminder from PQAC and Labor and Industries (L&I) helps provide additional guidance to licensees under the commission's jurisdictions to follow the Governor's Proclamation [20-24.2](#), along with L&I rules on respiratory protection and personal protective equipment (PPE). Hospitals must also abide by OSHA PPE and respirator practices for healthcare delivery. For other employees and operations, general L&I employer requirements must be followed.

This guidance is not intended to duplicate current efforts in promoting infection prevention practices, but rather to supplement that work with a reminder of available resources, updated best practices, and compliance expectations. As a result, pharmacies and pharmacists should conduct their own review of all applicable proclamations, orders and regulations, and should direct questions regarding their compliance to an attorney or other qualified professional.

KEY MEASURES

1. Minimize physical contact with patients and between patients. Maintain social distancing (6 feet between individuals) for people entering the pharmacy or facility as much as possible. Use signage/barriers and floor markers to instruct waiting patients to remain 6 feet back from the counter, from other patient interfaces, and from other patients and pharmacy or medical staff. Recommend posting maximum occupancy sign at the discretion of the pharmacy to ensure adequate social distancing. Clean and disinfect the vaccination/treatment area frequently between patients. (CDC, 2020; 2021)^{1,2}

2. Pharmacies and health care facilities should develop a strategy for screening patients for fever and symptoms of COVID-19 prior to providing vaccinations. Screening protocols should follow the most current CDC and DOH guidance. (DOH, 2020)⁷ (CDC, 2021)^{2,3}
3. Ensure proper source controls and protections. Because of the potential for asymptomatic and pre-symptomatic transmission, source control measures are recommended for everyone in a healthcare facility, even if they do not have symptoms of COVID-19. Pharmacists should follow standard and droplet precautions and adhere to additional PPE recommendations, including use of a facemask at all times while in the facility. Use of eye protection is required (goggles or a full face shield) in areas with moderate to substantial community transmission during the vaccination interaction with the patient. (CDC, 2020; 2021)^{1,2} (DOH, 2020)⁷
4. Patients must wear a cloth face covering if over the age of 2 (if tolerated). (CDC, 2020; 2021)^{1,2} Refer to Labor & Industries '[Which Mask for Which Task?](#)' publication for proper mask assessments for staff. (L&I, 2020)⁶ Face coverings and masks are essential tools to mitigate the spread of coronavirus. Transmission risk is extremely high when employees transport people with COVID-19 or work in residential or non-hospital or clinic settings within six feet of someone infected with the coronavirus.
 - a. All licensed pharmacy staff must wear at minimum a medical procedure or surgical mask when providing patient services such as vaccinations. These masks may also be necessary when social distancing is not practical in the physical layout of the pharmacy.
 - b. A respirator, such as an N95 filtering face piece or other particulate respirator, must be used by staff who provide lengthy patient services in close proximity (less than 3 feet, face to face), oversee high risk procedures (such as providing medicine through a nebulizer), or work with patients with suspected or known COVID-19.
 - c. Pharmacy staff not in close proximity to patients or other workers may use cloth face coverings. Cloth face coverings should NOT be worn instead of a respirator or facemask if more than source control (i.e., to protect other people in case the person is infected) is required.
5. Pharmacies should establish vaccination operations consistent with CDC guidance and [Governor's Proclamation 20-24.2](#). For example, perform vaccinations in an open area. If using privacy screens, ensure that the screens do not restrict airflow. (CDC, 2020; 2021)^{1,2}
6. All staff must be trained on COVID-19 procedures and infection control procedures. (L&I, 2020)⁸

Lastly, to ensure all steps are taken to reduce the chance of transmission of COVID-19, adequate time should be provided to the caregiver to be able to follow all steps to protect

pharmacy staff and the public. This guidance is to ensure that pharmacist and pharmacy staff have the safe place they deserve.

REFERENCES

1. CDC (2020). Guidance for Pharmacies. Retrieved 9-14-20 from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/pharmacies.html>
2. CDC (2021). Interim Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations for Healthcare Personnel During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Pandemic from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/infection-control-recommendations.html>
3. CDC (2021). Symptoms of Coronavirus. Retrieved on 9-14-20 from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>
4. CDC (2020). Vaccination Guidance During a Pandemic. Retrieved 9-14-20 from <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pandemic-guidance/index.html>
5. Joint Hazard Alert from Washington State Department of Health and Labor and Industries <https://lni.wa.gov/safety-health/preventing-injuries-illnesses/hazardalerts/HazardAlertCOVIDHealthCare.pdf>
6. Which Mask for Which Task? from <https://lni.wa.gov/forms-publications/F414-168-000.pdf>
7. Washington Department of Health Recommended Guidance for Daily COVID-19 Screening of Employees and Visitors from <https://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/1600/coronavirus/Employervisitorscreeningguidance.pdf>
8. Labor and Industries Emergency (CR-103E) Adoption Language. WAC 296-800-14035 2019 Novel coronavirus prohibited business activities and compliance with conditions for operations from https://www.lni.wa.gov/rulemaking-activity/AO20-16/2016CR103EAdoption.pdf?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

9. Proclamation by the Governor Amending Proclamations 20-05 AND 20-20-24, et seq., 20-24.2. Requirements for Non-Urgent Medical and Dental Procedures from https://www.governor.wa.gov/sites/default/files/proclamations/proc_20-24.2.pdf
10. Washington Department of Health Vaccination PPE guidance <https://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/1600/coronavirus/COVID-19VaccineGloveGuidance.pdf>
11. PPE Shortages: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/ppe-strategy/index.html>; <https://www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/COVID19/HealthcareProviders#heading54304>