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Dear Allied Health Professional

RE: MASKS DIRECTIVE FROM SA HEALTH FOR AHPS

Today has seen a number of announcements by the state government with regard to changes that are to be employed by health practitioners for the immediate future. The intent is to protect health workers, their staff and the community more broadly as we all work through the impact of the latest developments in the pandemic and the potential impacts.

Under the new Direction announced as of 00:01 hours on 1 December 2020, all healthcare settings, including allied health practices:

- Will be required to have a COVID Safe Plan.
- The COVID Safe plan for healthcare settings must include a contact tracing system, such as the **COVID Safe Check-In**. There will be initial 72 hour exemption period as healthcare settings establish this.
- All people (all care providers, patients, clients, residents, administrative and other staff, employees, visitors, students, contractors and any other person on the premises at which the service is provided must wear a single use a single use surgical mask (covering mouth and nose) at all times when in the physical presence of other persons on the premises) Cloth masks are not sufficient for healthcare settings.
- There are exceptions to mask wearing in some situations:
  - (i) a patient, resident or client and/or a person providing care if, in the provider or carer's professional opinion, the wearing of a mask will hinder the provision of the relevant care; and
  - (ii) any person who is affected by a relevant medical condition, including problems with their breathing, a serious condition of the face, a disability or a mental health condition; and
  - (iii) to enable communication by or with any person who is deaf or hard of hearing, where the ability to see the mouth is essential for communication; and
  - (iv) a patient, resident or client under the age of 12; and
  - (v) a resident or live-in staff member of a residential care facility, including in circumstances in which it is not possible to comply with the physical distancing principle.

A health care setting includes, GP practices, public and private hospitals and specialist practices, including drug and alcohol facilities, pharmacies, private and public allied health services (including those provided by a counsellor, speech pathologist, sonographer, social worker, rehabilitation counsellor, radiation therapist, radiographer, psychologist, prosthetist / orthotist, podiatrist, physiotherapist, pharmacist, music therapist, osteopath, orthoptist, optometrist, occupational therapist, genetic counsellor, exercise physiologist, dietitian, counsellor, chiropractor, audiologist, art/creative art therapist, or bowen therapist), Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services and dental services.

- Density requirements should be 1 person per 4 square metres. Density requirements do not include people employed at the practice.

While healthcare settings are required to have this in place from 1 December, an initial leniency period will apply while staff and the community are informed and educated on this requirement.

More information, including FAQs is available at [sahealth.sa.gov.au/covidmasks](https://sahealth.sa.gov.au/covidmasks) This includes a comprehensive list of where and when masks are mandatory and exemptions to the Direction.

More information on COVID Safe plans and the COVID SAfe Check-In is available at [covid-19.sa.gov.au](https://covid-19.sa.gov.au).

#### **FAQs:**

##### **Are there any exceptions?**

There are exceptions to mask wearing in some situations, such as, certain breathing difficulties, some mental health conditions, communication with deaf or hard or hearing community members or for people under the age of 12.

##### **Do I need to wear a mask if I can physically distance?**

Yes.

##### **Do I need to wear a mask when I am working in a single office?**

Technically no, however if anyone enters your office you will both need to wear them.

##### **Do I have to wear a mask in public (off site)?**

At this time in South Australia it is not mandatory for the general community, but it is recommended to wear a mask when out in public if you are unable to physically distance.

As healthcare workers we should be modelling behaviour for the community.

##### **How often should I replace the mask?**

Disposable masks can be worn for a minimum of 2 to 4 hours, as long as they remain intact, you haven't touched your mask and it's not damp. Masks can be discarded into general waste.

Yours sincerely



**DR INGRID LENSINK**  
**A/Chief Allied and Scientific Health Officer**

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