

Janet T. Mills  
Governor

Jeanne M. Lambrew, Ph.D.  
Commissioner



Maine Department of Health and Human Services  
Child and Family Services  
11 State House Station  
2 Anthony Avenue  
Augusta, Maine 04333-0011  
Tel.: (207) 624-7900; Toll Free: (877) 680-5866  
TTY: Dial 711 (Maine Relay); Fax: (207) 287-5282

## Updated Guidance for Behavioral Health Providers

**RELEASE DATE: June 16, 2021**

The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) recognizes the vitally important role of Behavioral Health care for Maine's citizens. The Department has developed this guidance document to provide guidelines to ensure the health and safety of staff, individuals served, and children.

Providers should follow these guidelines, as well as continue to monitor US and Maine CDC guidance:

<https://www.maine.gov/decd/general-guidance>

Maine is deferring to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance for certain business sectors and activities, which is available at:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/index.html>

Guidance is available for Group Homes and for Direct Service Professionals at:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/group-homes.html>

Please note the areas of guidance in this document that have changed are identified by the section header highlighted in **yellow**, as well as the specific guidance updates/changes identified in **red**.

### **COVID-19 Vaccines**

All people age 12 or older are eligible for COVID-19 vaccinations.

All COVID-19 vaccines currently available in the United States have been shown to be safe and effective at preventing COVID-19.

For more information on the benefits of the COVID-19

vaccines: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/vaccine-benefits.html>

For information on where to find a vaccination site in Maine:

<https://www.maine.gov/covid19/vaccines/vaccination-sites>

People are considered fully vaccinated for COVID-19  $\geq 2$  weeks after they have received the second dose in a 2-dose series (Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna), or  $\geq 2$  weeks after they have received a single-dose vaccine (Johnson & Johnson [J&J]/Janssen)<sup>±</sup>; there is currently no post-vaccination time limit on fully vaccinated status. The term "unvaccinated people" refers to individuals of all ages, including children, that have not completed a vaccination series or received a single-dose vaccine.

Risk of SARS-CoV-2 infection is minimal for fully vaccinated people. The risk of SARS-CoV-2 transmission from fully vaccinated people to unvaccinated people is also reduced. Therefore, fully vaccinated people can resume activities without wearing a mask or physically distancing, except where required by federal, state, local, tribal, or territorial laws, rules, and regulations, including local business and workplace guidance.

### **COVID-19 Testing**

The State of Maine has expanded its COVID-19 testing capacity. Under a [standing order](#), anyone in Maine over the age of 12 months who feels they need a test for COVID-19 may get a test at participating sites, without the need for a test order from their own health care provider. More details and testing locations can be found [here](#).

### **Reduce the Spread of COVID-19**

The actions put in place by your program and taken by the staff and families will help reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19. Using many of the following prevention strategies at the same time can lower the risk of transmission of COVID-19 in your program:

- Stay home when sick.
- Encourage staff and families to get vaccinated to protect them against COVID-19
- Continue daily screening procedures for children, staff and parents.
- When possible, in multi-site programs limit staff working at more than one site.
- Wash hands frequently.
- Develop a schedule for increased frequency of routine cleaning of high-touch surfaces.
- Avoid shared objects when possible.
- Limit the use of communal spaces or ensure proper disinfection in between groups.
- Limit mixing between groups such that there is minimal or no interaction between groups or cohorts.
- Limit any nonessential visitors, volunteers, and activities involving external groups or organizations or offer virtual events.
- Ensure State of Maine travel guidance is being followed by staff and families.
- Know the signs and symptoms of COVID-19: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/guidance-for-childcare.html>

### **In-Person Community Behavioral Health Services and Center Based Behavioral Health Services**

Providers who provide in-person Behavioral Health Services should adhere to the following guidelines:

**Group Size Limitation.** On May 13<sup>th</sup>, Governor Mills updated the public health protocols under the Moving Maine Forward Plan. **Effective May 24<sup>th</sup>, Maine lifted all capacity limits and requirements to physically distance in all public outdoor settings.**

**Physical Distancing.** Physical distancing is no longer required but continues to be a useful strategy to mitigate the transmission of the COVID virus.

**Screening for Symptoms: Screening and Documentation.** All staff and individuals providing home or community base services or attending facility/center-based programs should still be screened for COVID-19 symptoms each time they enter the program or are providing services. Volunteers and interns should follow all protocols outlined for staff. Providers should maintain documentation of all screening performed.

- Minimize the risk of disease introduction or transmission, by requiring every person entering the facility to be screened for any signs or symptoms of viral infection for as long as this pandemic is active. Please refer to the US CDC for a list of [signs and symptoms](#).
- Screen staff and visitors upon arrival at the facility prior to interacting with any clients or beginning their normal workday. Staff or visitors who present with symptoms when entering the facility or during the day should be sent home immediately.
- The screening of staff and visitors should also include questions regarding anyone in their household who is exhibiting the symptoms listed above.
- The screening of staff and visitors should also include questions regarding their exposure to anyone diagnosed with COVID-19 or exhibiting the symptoms of COVID-19.

**Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)/Face Coverings.** Governor Mills lifted the requirement to wear a face covering outdoors on April 27, 2021. Governor Mills announced on May 14 that the State of Maine will adopt the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (U.S. CDC) [new guidance](#) which allows fully vaccinated Americans not to wear face coverings indoors, effective May 24, 2021.

Consistent with the U.S. CDC's guidelines, it is recommended that people in Maine who are not fully vaccinated wear face coverings in indoor public settings.

- It is recommended, but not required, that fully vaccinated staff members wear a face covering indoors to role model for children that are unvaccinated.
- It is recommended that unvaccinated staff members wear a face covering indoors, especially when working directly with children who are not vaccinated.

Cloth face coverings should NOT be used on children under age 2 because of the danger of suffocation

#### **Maintain healthy operations.**

- Monitor absenteeism to identify any trends with employees or clients due to illness. This might indicate spread of COVID-19 or other illness. Have a roster of trained back-up staff in order to maintain sufficient staffing levels.
- Designate a staff person to be responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns.
  - Employees should know who this person is and how to contact them.
- Create a communication system for staff and clients for self-reporting of symptoms and notification of exposures and closures.
- Support coping and resilience among employees and clients. As a reminder, the [Front Line Warmline](#) is in place to help health care workers and first responders cope with the emotional toll of this pandemic: 1-866-367-4440.

- In the event a person diagnosed with COVID-19 is determined to have been in the building and poses a risk to the community, programs should consult CDC officials and may consider closing for cleaning and disinfection.

**Plan for when a staff member, child or visitor becomes sick.**

- Require clients to cancel and reschedule if they are sick.
- Require employees to stay home and to notify workplace administrators when sick or when someone in their household is sick.
- Review, update, or develop workplace plans to include non-punitive leave policies for people with COVID-19 symptoms.
- Establish procedures for safely transporting anyone sick to their home or to a health care facility, as appropriate and applicable.
- Know the signs and symptoms of COVID-19. Have a plan of what to do if staff or clients become symptomatic during service delivery and make sure all staff know and can implement the plan.

Follow CDC Guidelines on quarantine and isolation after symptoms subside:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/quarantine.html>

**COVID-19 Reportable Events.** Providers must comply with COVID-19 Reportable Event Guidance and Procedures:

- [Adults](#)
- [Children](#)

**Telehealth Option.** Community telehealth services may continue as an option for individuals during the COVID-19 emergency, please reference [Telehealth](#). Individuals may receive both telehealth and in-person services during the COVID-19 emergency. All services must be provided based on the treatment plan and must follow [MaineCare Guidelines](#) for the service being provided.

**Visitor Policy at Residential facilities.** Unless a facility has been advised otherwise by the CDC, in-person visits between clients and their parents/guardians at Residential facilities should continue with established and enforced visitation procedures including, but not limited to, controlling the number of visitors at a given time, screening incoming visitors for COVID-19 symptoms, and encouraging physical distancing. Face coverings should be worn indoors by all visitors who are not fully vaccinated. Visits should be held outside when possible to allow for physical distancing. Providers must communicate COVID-19 safety precautions and plans to individuals, families, as well as any other visitors prior to entering the facility.

**Transportation Information:**

Individuals traveling using public transportation, NET, or other group ride share must be supported to maintain physical distancing and it is recommended that unvaccinated persons wear face coverings during transport. The [MaineCare COVID-19](#) page has updated

links for Transportation. For more information, please visit: [Transportation and COVID-19 \(Coronavirus\) Questions and Answers \(PDF\)](#)

**Other Information and Resources:**

Plain Language Information on COVID-19:

<https://selfadvocacyinfo.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Plain-Language-Information-on-Coronavirus.pdf>

Administration for Community Living COVID-19 Resources:

<https://acl.gov/COVID-19>

US CDC Poster on Infection Control:

[https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/epi/airborne/documents/stop-the-spread-of-germs-poster\\_english.pdf](https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/epi/airborne/documents/stop-the-spread-of-germs-poster_english.pdf)

Office of MaineCare Services COVID 19 Guidance:

<https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/oms/about-us/projects-initiatives/covid-19>

Office of Child and Family Services Guidance:

<https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/ocfs/COVID-19-response.shtml>

Office of Behavioral Health Guidance:

<https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/samhs/coronavirus.shtml>