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OPERATIONAL BULLETIN

Bulletin #	Title	Date Issued
#2023-04-25-01	Masking Requirement Cessation	April 25, 2023
Superseded	Released By:	Pages
N/A	Maine EMS	2
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As we continue to respond to and evolve through the COVID-19 Pandemic, the MDPB and Maine EMS have been closely following the practices initiated at the very beginning of the pandemic response. As case numbers wane and as other protective measures are increasingly available, the healthcare system has begun to reassess the need for uniform masking in all patient encounters.

Based on the current state of the pandemic both locally and nationally, as well as changes in the masking practices initiated by Maine hospitals, Maine EMS believes it is safe to consider removing mandatory masking from some patient encounters; however, there are certain situations and circumstances where masking remains mandatory:

- **Patients with Symptoms of COVID-19, including Acute Respiratory Symptoms, Vomiting, Diarrhea, and Fevers.**
- When performing **aerosol-generating procedures**. During these events, EMS clinicians should assume the highest-level precautions.
- **Immunocompromised Patients**
- **Known COVID-19 Patients**
- **During Local Outbreaks of Infectious Respiratory Diseases (e.g., COVID-19)** – Maine EMS and the MDPB encourage EMS Agencies and system leaders to resume uniform masking locally should outbreaks develop within the agency’s response area. The pandemic has demonstrated the benefit of non-pharmacologic measures such as masking, and these measures should be reassumed should local outbreaks occur.
- **Patient/Family Preference** – some patients may have pre-existing medical conditions which place them at risk if they were to contract COVID-19. If patients/family request that EMS clinicians wear masks, this request must be honored. If patients and/or family are masked on scene, EMS clinicians are expected to mirror that behavior with masking.
- **Local EMS Leadership Decisions** – there may be conditions within the local community, short of local outbreaks, which prompt EMS Agency Leadership to resume

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uniform masking. Maine EMS is supportive of local EMS Leadership as they respond to local conditions.

Please recall, under these circumstance, EMS Clinicians should also mask patients.

Maine EMS also acknowledges that some EMS Clinicians may prefer to continue masking for personal reasons and supports individual preferences regarding masking.

Maine EMS understands that the hospital-based health care systems may evolve at different paces. To continue collaboration with the local health care systems, EMS clinicians shall abide by masking policies of the hospitals they transport to/from if they are more stringent than those outlined above.

The decision to remove masking requirements is subject to current public health conditions. Therefore, Maine EMS may reverse this decision at a future date depending on the status of the pandemic and conditions within the state.

Maine EMS wants to thank you and appreciates you for all your efforts during the pandemic and continued today. Your efforts and attention were invaluable to the health and safety of the citizens and visitors of our state, and assured our response was the most effective possible. It is only with considerable thought and mindfulness that Maine EMS works to align our practices with that of the rest of the Maine healthcare system. We thank you for your continued attention to these topics as we continue to respond to the pandemic.