

Protections and Protocols for: PERSONAL CARE ASSISTANTS (PCA) - CHOICE AND TRADITIONAL, and HOMEMAKERS

PCAs and Homemakers continue to provide essential caregiving services to their clients face-to-face in their clients' homes. These services are not able to be conducted remotely. PCA and Homemaking services are provided while optimizing PPE and other standard precautions as outlined below to ensure the health and safety of the clients and the employees who provide their services.

HANDLING SICK EMPLOYEES

The following policies and procedures are being implemented to assess PCA and Homemaking employees' health status prior to entering the client's home and for employees to report when they are sick and/or experiencing symptoms.

Health Screening/Self-Monitoring/Reporting Policy

Employees who are coming into the office are required to take their temperatures at home, self-assess their symptoms, and report concerns to Alliance. Employees should contact the Directors of Nursing at 651-895-8030 to make a report. Employees must stay home and report any of the following symptoms that may apply:

- Temp of 100.3 or greater (with or without accompanying symptoms)
- Chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Sore throat
- Muscle aches
- Headache
- Loss of smell and/or taste
- Fatigue
- Nausea/Vomiting
- Diarrhea

Employees who have self-monitored from home and are symptom free, are to don a cloth face mask before entering their client's home and wash their hands immediately upon arrival before beginning to work with the client. Employees are required to maintain 6 feet of distance from their client as much as possible, except when providing necessary personal care.

If an employee becomes sick at work, they must leave the client's home immediately. The ill employee must report their symptoms/illness, as required above, and follow MDH quarantine guidelines (listed below).

If a PCA or Homemaker's client is sick or showing symptoms, the PCA or Homemaker should reschedule the visit and notify Alliance immediately.

PCA and Homemaker employees have been informed of these protocols through regular correspondence since March 2020.

Returning to Work after Exposure or Potential Exposure

Employees must stay home when they are sick, when household members are sick, or when required by a health care provider to isolate or quarantine themselves or a member of their household. The employee will be permitted to return to work following the conditions that have been set forth per the document, [COVID-19 Recommendations for Health Care Workers \(state.mn.us\)](https://www.state.mn.us/health/covid19/recommendations-for-health-care-workers.pdf) which states the following:

IF YOU HAVE NO SYMPTOMS:

- If the exposed employee and/or household member does not show symptoms of COVID-19 ten (10) days after exposure, they can return on the 11th day, or seven (7) days after receiving a negative COVID-19 test; however the test needs to be performed on day 5 or later from the exposure date.
- At least 24 hours have passed since recovery, defined as resolution of fever without the use of fever reducing medications **AND** improvement in symptoms.
- Practice of diligent hand hygiene and wearing a medical-grade facemask at all times until 14 days after illness onset.

IF YOU HAVE SYMPTOMS:

- If an exposed employee and/or household member develops symptoms of COVID-19, they are required to quarantine for fourteen (14) days if no COVID-19 test is taken. If they receive a positive COVID-19 test, they are required to quarantine ten (10) days from onset of symptoms; if asymptomatic, they are required to quarantine ten (10) days from the date of the positive COVID-19 test.
- When you live with someone who has COVID-19, you should quarantine during the time they might be contagious (their isolation period), as well as the time you could develop COVID-19. **This may mean you need to quarantine for 24 days or more.** Your 14-day quarantine period starts the day **after** the last person you live with completes their isolation period. This is usually:
 - 10 days from the day their symptoms started.
 - If they didn't have symptoms, 10 days from the day they got tested.
 - Follow the recommendations of your local public health department if you need to quarantine. Options they will consider include stopping quarantine:
 - After day 10 without testing
 - After day 7 after receiving a negative test result (test must occur on day 5 or later)

- Employees who are severely immunocompromised but remain asymptomatic throughout their infection should be excluded from work for 20 days following specimen collection.
- Continue to watch for symptoms through day 14 after exposure, even if the quarantine was shortened.

Who does not need to quarantine?

If you have recovered from COVID-19 in the past 90 days and have close contact with someone with COVID-19, you do not need to quarantine if ALL of the following are true:

- Your illness was confirmed with a positive lab test in the past 90 days.
- You have fully recovered.
- You do not currently have any symptoms of COVID-19.

Vaccination

If someone has completed COVID-19 vaccination (two doses in a two-dose series or one dose in a one-dose series) and is exposed, they do not need to quarantine if ALL of the following are true:

- The COVID-19 exposure was at least 14 days after their vaccination series was fully completed.
- The COVID-19 exposure was within 90 days of their final dose of the vaccination series.
- They do not currently have any symptoms of COVID-19.
- MDH recommends testing three to five days after exposure, even if they do not have symptoms.

Regarding vaccination status, if an employee has already started the process of vaccination, we encourage them to complete all doses. If the employee has proof of vaccination, we would still like to have a copy for our records. We do not know what the future will look like for any mandates or other vaccination efforts so it is prudent to prepare for the possibility that it may be required again. All employees will be kept up to date in a timely manner regarding on-going vaccination mandates, updates, or changes.

If you have not yet received a vaccination, the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)** still recommends that you do so:

“COVID-19 vaccines are effective at protecting people from COVID-19 and help keep adults and children from getting seriously sick. COVID-19 vaccines can reduce the risk of people spreading the virus that causes COVID-19. Getting everyone ages 5 years and older vaccinated can help the entire family, including siblings who are not eligible for vaccination and family members who may be at risk of getting very sick if they are infected.

Adults and children 5 years and older who are fully vaccinated can resume activities that they did before the pandemic. Learn more about what people can do [when they have been fully vaccinated](#). Studies show that COVID-19 vaccines are effective, especially at keeping adults and children from getting seriously ill even if they do get COVID-19. Learn more about the [benefits of getting vaccinated](#). COVID-19 vaccines teach our immune system how to recognize and fight the virus that causes COVID-19. It typically takes 2 weeks after vaccination for the body to build protection (immunity) against the virus that causes COVID-19.”

Leave Policy

Leave policies promote employees staying at home when they are sick, when household members are sick, or when required by a health care provider to isolate or quarantine themselves or a member of their household.

- Per FMLA, Alliance will provide up to twelve (12) weeks unpaid leave to eligible employees for a variety of reasons related to family and medical care in accordance with state and federal law requirements. Eligible employees are those who have worked for the company at least twelve (12) months and worked 1,250 hours during the twelve (12) months immediately preceding the start of the leave.
 - Should an employee not qualify for FMLA, the Benefits Coordinator will work with them regarding reasonable accommodation and/or leave when needed to ensure that the employee is able to stay home without worry when ill.
- Alliance PCA Choice employees are eligible to accrue PTO time through the SEI Union based on hours worked. These employees are encouraged to use this time, when needed.
- Employees who have exhausted or are not eligible for PTO will be permitted to take time off, unpaid, when needed.
- PCA and Homemaker employees have been encouraged to reach out to Alliance with any concerns or accommodation requests to ensure they feel safe and comfortable while working.

Exposure Notification

Alliance has implemented a policy for informing employees if they have been exposed to a person with COVID-19 at their workplace and requiring them to quarantine for the required amount of time.

- Exposed employees will be notified immediately via phone/email by their supervisor if they have been exposed to a person with COVID-19 at work.
- The identity of the individual with positive COVID-19 will not be released.
- Exposed employees will be sent home and will be required to quarantine as outlined above in the “Return to Work After Exposure or Potential Exposure” section.

Privacy of Worker Health Status

An employees’ health status and health information is considered private and will be protected by Alliance.

- All employee health information is protected, kept confidential, and not released. Only the Director of Nursing who received the report will be privy to the name of the employee with COVID-19 or COVID-19 symptoms.
- Any information regarding an employee's health information will be stored outside of the employee's personnel file in a locked and secured area.

CUSTOMERS, CLIENTS, VISITORS:

Visitors at the Office

Alliance's corporate office has opened back up to its customers, clients, and visitors. However, there are only a small handful of employees who continue to work in the building on a daily basis with all other employees working from home remotely. For this reason, it is still recommended to customers, clients, and visitors that all communication with/by our office employees occur through phone, email, or video. Please refer to "Protections and Protocols for Administrative Employees" to review requirements for visitors and clients that may enter the building.

Client's Homes

While we cannot control who the client permits to enter their home, PCAs and Homemakers are advised to discourage the client from entertaining any visitors during their work shift. If the PCA or Homemaker is uncomfortable or feels that their health or safety is in jeopardy when in the client's home, the PCA or Homemaker may leave the shift (making sure to acknowledge client safety) and notify Alliance of the situation. The PCA should also notify the RP if applicable.

SOCIAL DISTANCING

PCA and Homemaker employees should maintain a social distance of 6 feet from their client and others in the client's household as often as possible, except PCA staff when providing personal care. PCAs and Homemakers should follow any other client-specific infection control guidelines as directed by the care plan and the supervising Registered Nurse/Qualified Professional.

As mentioned above, Alliance's corporate office is open, however all employees continue to follow enhanced social distancing protocols. Social distancing of at least 6 feet will be implemented and maintained between employees in the workplace.

PCA employees can come into the office as needed as long as they follow workplace policies and procedures. Employees should remain 6 or more feet apart. Any PCA employee coming to work in the office must familiarize themselves with the "Protections and Protocols for Administrative Employees" and follow those protocols while present in the office.

HYGIENE, PPE, AND SOURCE CONTROL

Basic infection prevention measures and universal precautions are being implemented at our workplaces at all times. Alliance does not have direct control over clients' homes or the individuals living in those homes, however employees are expected to practice good hygiene, wear appropriate PPE, and implement source control measures during their shifts when working with their clients.

If the client is sick or showing symptoms, the PCA or Homemaker should reschedule the visit and notify Alliance immediately. Employees who are concerned about their own health and safety while in their client's home should contact Alliance and/or their supervising RN/Qualified Professional immediately to discuss the situation.

Hygiene

All employees are instructed and required to wash or sanitize their hands immediately upon entering the client's home and before they leave. Employees are instructed to wash their hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water frequently throughout their day/shift, but especially at the beginning and end of their shift, prior to and after any mealtimes, and after using the restroom.

PCAs and Homemakers should be encouraging their clients to practice the same hygiene methods for themselves and to reiterate the importance of these practices on a regular basis to ensure health and safety for all.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)/Face Masks

Client's homes are considered part of our indoor business, therefore PCAs and Homemakers must wear a cloth face mask when entering a client's home and for the duration of their shift. PCAs and Homemakers may request that a client wear a face mask during their shift if possible, however we cannot require that client's wear a face mask in their own homes. If the client is sick or showing symptoms, the PCA or Homemaker should reschedule the visit and notify Alliance immediately.

- Employees are expected to provide their own cloth face masks but will be provided with a one by Alliance if they are unable to obtain their own.
- Alliance reviewed all PCA and homemaking clients' care plans and determined that those employees who are providing close contact complex cares to their clients should also receive face masks, as defined by the CDC. Employees who have been directed to wear a face mask, as defined by the CDC, should continue to do so. These face masks, as defined by the CDC, are provided by Alliance and should be picked up at the Eagan office by appointment, or may be mailed out on a bi-weekly basis (see "Mail, PPE Distribution, and Timecards" Section for more information).

Source Controls

- Employees are instructed to cover their mouth and nose with their sleeve or a tissue when coughing or sneezing (even when wearing a mask), and to avoid touching their face, particularly their mouth, nose, and eyes, with their hands.
- Employees are expected to dispose of tissues in proper trash receptacles and wash or sanitize their hands immediately afterward.
- Training on respiratory etiquette has been communicated via email memos to staff.
- Employees are expected to keep their food individualized and not share any food or drinks with clients or other members of the client's household.

WORKPLACE VENTILATION

Alliance does not have control over a client's home or ventilation system. PCAs and Homemakers are instead required to wear a face mask, as stated above, and follow proper social distancing protocol. When possible and appropriate, PCAs and Homemakers may encourage clients to open their windows, or complete a portion of their visit outdoors (ie. in the backyard, or going for a walk) to increase exposure to fresh air as weather permits.

ACCESS AND ASSIGNMENT

New client intakes are communicated by the intake coordinator to the QDDS or nurse via email.

PCA Choice

- All PCA Choice assignments/schedules are managed independently for PCA Choice employees by the client and/or responsible party.
- It is the responsibility of the client and/or responsible party to cancel or reschedule shifts due to COVID-19 symptoms or positive diagnosis.

PCA Traditional

- All PCA Traditional assignments/schedules are managed by the staffing coordinator and are communicated via email or phone.
- PCA Traditional employees and the staffing coordinator can coordinate cancelled/rescheduled shifts due to COVID-19 symptoms or positive diagnosis.

Homemaking

- All Homemakers assignments/schedules are managed by the staffing coordinator and are communicated via email or phone.
- Homemaker employees and the staffing coordinator can coordinate cancelled/rescheduled shifts due to COVID-19 symptoms or positive diagnosis

CLEANING, SANITIZING, AND DISINFECTING

Again, Alliance does not have control over a client's home environment, however memos have been sent out to clients and/or their responsible parties with information regarding the importance of keeping a clean and sanitized environment for the safety of themselves and their staff. PCAs and Homemakers are expected to assist with this protocol when working with their clients (i.e. disinfecting kitchen areas before and after meal prep, and cleaning/sanitizing all areas that they touched during their shift before leaving, etc).

PCAs and Homemakers should contact Alliance if they have questions or concerns regarding the safety of their work environment.

MAIL, PPE DISTRIBUTION, and TIMECARDS

Mail and Package Service

Alliance's office is currently open to the public and for allowing drop-off and pick-up for mail and packages. Delivery/mail personnel will be allowed to enter, and then asked to drop-off and/or pick-up mail/deliveries at the far end of the reception counter while maintaining a distance of 6 feet or more from the receptionist. Once the delivery person leaves, our receptionist sanitizes the surface and distributes the mail/packages as appropriate.

Alliance utilizes the loading dock to allow for larger deliveries ensuring social distancing protocol is still maintained.

Distribution of PPE

Alliance provides PPE supplies to PCA staff of complex clients for pick up or mailing from our corporate office. Social distancing practices always apply. If picking up PPE from the office, PCA staff are expected to follow the "Protections and Protocols for Administrative Employees" in regards to infection control, social distancing, symptom self-screening, etc.

Timecards

Alliance no longer accepts timecards via drop off at the office. Employees should continue to submit timecards in one of the following ways:

FAX: 651-895-8070

EMAIL: Payroll@alliancehealthcare.com

MAIL: 2260 Cliff Road
Eagan, MN 55122
Attn: Payroll Department

Employment Applications

Alliance no longer accepts employment applications via drop off at the office. Employees should submit employment applications in one of the following ways:

FAX: 651-895-8070

EMAIL: HR@alliancehealthcare.com

MAIL: 2260 Cliff Road
Eagan, MN 55122
Attn: HR Department