

Protections and Protocols for: NURSES – SKILLED AND SUPERVISORY(RN), SKILLED FIELD STAFF (HHA), and QP/QDDS

RNs, HHAs, and QP/QDDS employees 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. 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.

If a client refuses a visit the RN will check in with the client via phone or other HIPAA compliant telecommunications to complete a wellness check. Most QP/QDDS visits are currently being conducted face-to-face, but can be completed via telehealth if needed. These arrangements could change at any time depending on state/federal guidance in compliance with on-going pandemic precautions.

HANDLING SICK EMPLOYEES and CLIENTS

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

Employee Health Screening/Self Monitoring/Reporting Policy

Before coming to work and/or entering a client's home, employees are required to take their temperature 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

If an employee is symptomatic or has had exposure, and/or has contacted the Directors of Nursing to make a report, Alliance can recommend COVID-19 testing according to updated CDC guidelines, but it is not required. Alliance does not reimburse for COVID-19 testing.

Employees who have self monitored from home and are symptom free, are to don an appropriate face mask, as defined by the CDC, for the visit 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 sick employee must report their symptoms/illness, as required above, and follow MDH quarantine guidelines (listed below).

- Each client has a contingency/back-up plan in place in the event that staff is not able to attend their scheduled visit.

Employees have been informed of these protocols through regular correspondence since March 2020.

Client Health Screening

RNs will screen each client before starting their scheduled visit using pre-approved screening questions to determine symptoms or illness that may be related to COVID-19.

- If a client answers "yes" to any of the screening questions the nurse is expected to reschedule the visit. If rescheduling is not possible due to an essential visit, the nurse is expected to wear full PPE equipment (N95 mask, face shield, gown, gloves), which has been provided by Alliance.
- The nurse will provide training to the client regarding proper handwashing and source control techniques.

HHAs who believe their client is sick or showing symptoms should reschedule their visit through the staffing coordinator and notify Alliance immediately.

QP/QDDS employees who believe their client is sick or showing symptoms should also reschedule their visit and notify Alliance immediately.

Memos have been sent to all skilled clients since March 2020 in regards to screening, diagnosis and/or symptoms of COVID-19, how to sanitize their homes using disinfectants, how to wash their hands and cover their mouths (maintain healthy hygiene), and social distancing.

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) 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 a reasonable accommodation and/or leave when needed to ensure that the employee is able to stay home without worry when ill.
- RNs, HHA admin, and QP/QDDS employees working 35+ hours a week are eligible to accrue both PTO and Vacation time and are encouraged to use this time, when needed.
- Employees who have exhausted or are not eligible for PTO or VAC will be permitted to take time off, unpaid, when needed.
- 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.

VISITORS and CLIENTS

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, RNs, HHAs, and QP/QDDS employees are advised to discourage the client from entertaining any visitors during their work shift. If the RN, HHA, or QP/QDDS are uncomfortable or feel that their health or safety is in jeopardy when in the client's home, the RN, HHA, or QP/QDDS may leave the shift and notify Alliance of the situation.

SOCIAL DISTANCING

RNs, HHAs, and QP/QDDS employees must wear face masks, as defined by the CDC, at all times and maintain social distancing of 6 feet from their client and others in the client's household as often as possible, except when providing personal cares. (See PPE section below.) Employees should follow any other client-specific infection control guidelines as directed by the client's careplan and the supervising Registered Nurse.

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.

- RNs, QP/QDDS employees can continue to work remotely, but can come into the office as needed as long as they follow workplace policies and procedures. Employees should remain 6 or more feet apart in their own, private, workspaces to ensure social distancing and sanitize their own workstations. Any RN, HHA, or QP/QDDS employee coming to work in the office must familiarize themselves with the "Protections and Protocols for Administrative Employees" and follow those protocols while working 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, RNs, HHAs, and QP/QDDS employees should follow directives in the “Client Health Screening” section above 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 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, and/or if visibly soiled. 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.

- Alliance provides hygiene/handwashing supplies, as well as PPE via our medical supply distributors or other vendors as items are available.
- The Directors of Nursing are responsible for keeping up to date with current supply levels and making sure all field employees are supplied with adequate PPE and sanitization products.
- Employees and clients have been reminded to avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- RNs, HHA’s, and QP/QDDS employees 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

- Fully vaccinated employees and visitors are not required to wear face masks while in Alliance’s corporate building. Employees and visitors who are not fully vaccinated have been recommended to continue to wear a mask while in the building.
- The CDC and the Minnesota Department of Health continue to recommend all health care workers wear a facemask regardless of vaccination status when in the health care setting.
- Clients’ homes are considered part of our indoor business/healthcare setting. RNs, HHAs, and QP/QDDS employees must wear a face mask, as defined by the CDC. A cloth/fabric mask may be worn over the top to protect its integrity, but is not required. Masks should be worn at all times when in the client’s home for employee and client safety.
- Face masks, as defined by the CDC, are provided by Alliance and should be picked up at the Eagan office or may be mailed out/distributed on a bi-weekly basis if requested (see “Mail, PPE Distribution, and Timecards” Section For More Information).
- Employees are expected to provide their own cloth masks if they so choose to use one (but will be provided with a cloth mask by Alliance if they are unable to obtain their own.) It is the responsibility of the mask’s owner to wash/sanitize their own cloth mask according to CDC instructions.

Employees 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.

- For HHA visits, if a client is sick or showing symptoms, the HHA should reschedule the visit through the staffing coordinator and notify Alliance immediately.
- For QP/QDDS visits, if a client is sick or showing symptoms, the QP/QDDS should reschedule the visit and notify Alliance immediately.
- 1) For RN visits, if a client has been exposed to COVID-19, is symptomatic, or a known positive, and the visit cannot be rescheduled, the RN should wear full PPE to include:
 - a. N-95 or higher level respirator
 - b. gown
 - c. gloves
 - d. eye protection/face shield

*Please make sure you are taking off and discarding PPE in the client's home before leaving and per protocol.

2) For RN visits, for all other clients, the RN must wear:

- a. well-fitting face mask/covering, as defined by the CDC
- b. eye protection/face shield-only if community transmission levels are considered substantial or high, per MDH COVID-19 Personal Protective Equipment and Source Control Grids, updated 12/7/2021. Employees can refer to the link below:
[MDHhttps://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hcp/ppegrid.pdf](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hcp/ppegrid.pdf)

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.

WORK PLACE VENTILATION

Alliance does not have control over a client's home or ventilation system. Employees are instead required to wear proper PPE and follow social distancing protocol. When possible and

appropriate, employees 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.

ACCESS AND ASSIGNMENT

New client intakes are communicated by the intake coordinator to the nursing and QP/QDDS staff via email.

RNs

- All nursing assignments are managed independently by each nursing staff and client rosters/schedules are posted on a shared drive.

HHAs

- HHA staff have their schedules managed by the staffing coordinator and is communicated via email.

QP/QDDS

- QP/QDDS staff manage their own schedules per arrangement with each client.

Employees and staffing coordinators can coordinate cancelled or rearranged visits if necessary due to symptomatic or positive COVID-19 clients.

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.

- Employees are expected to assist with this protocol when working with their clients (ie. disinfecting kitchen areas before and after meal prep, and cleaning/sanitizing all areas that they touched during their shift before leaving, etc).

Skilled employees are required to sanitize their own workspaces and supplies.

- Appropriate and effective cleaning and disinfecting supplies have been purchased and are available for use in accordance with product labels, safety data sheets and manufacturer specifications, and are being used with required personal protective equipment for the product as applicable. These products that meet EPA's criteria for use against SARS-COV-2 are used to disinfect nursing equipment after each client use.

RNs, HHAs, and QP/QDDS employees 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 RN, HHA, and QP/QDDS employees for pick up or mailing from our office building. Social distancing practices always apply.

- Local RN, HHA, and QP/QDDS employees:
 - RN, HHA, and QP/QDDS employees are able to pick up their PPE supplies at the office building as long as they are following the "Protections and Protocols for Administrative Employees" and follow those protocols while present in the office. The same applies for any HHA Admin staff.
 - A Director of Nursing or intake coordinator will set PPE supplies at each individual workspace before the employee arrives to ensure contactless delivery.
- Remote RN, HHA, and QP/QDDS employees:
 - Sauk Rapids area: PPE supplies will be mailed to the office manager to distribute, or directly to the requesting employee
 - Mankato area: PPE supplies will be mailed directly to the requesting employee or hand delivered via the Director of Nursing.

Timecards

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

FAX: 651-895-8070

EMAIL: RN: jillc@alliancehealthcare.com or biancag@alliancehealthcare.com

HHA: 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