The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) released the *Gatherings and Face Mask Order* under MCL 333.2253 effective November 18, 2020, that addresses concerns about the rising number of COVID-19 cases, gatherings, and wearing of face masks.  This order was extended on December 7 and was issued to protect vulnerable individuals, ensure the health care system can provide care for all health issues, and prevent the spread of COVID-19. Please see the  Gatherings and Face Mask Order.

**Clarifications:**

Q:  **How does the MDHHS order impact direct care workers providing personal care visits with individuals?**

A:  Direct care workers can continue to provide personal care and other essential home and community-based services to individuals.  Please see "Actions for Caregivers of Older Adults During COVID-19" and the associated Frequently Asked Questions document.

Q:  **Are direct care workers required to wear a face mask while providing services?**

A:  Direct care workers should wear a face mask while providing services to protect their safety and the safety of the individuals that they are supporting.  Masks may be removed temporarily for identification purposes and when communicating with someone who is deaf, deafblind, or hard of hearing and whose ability to see the mouth is essential to communication.  In these situations, you may consider wearing a clear face shield rather than a mask.

Q:  **Are recipients of personal care services or other individuals living with the recipient required to wear masks?**

A:  Members of the same household are not required to wear a mask within the household when no one else is present.  The MDHHS order indicates that a face mask is strongly encouraged even for individuals not required to wear one unless they are eating or drinking or receiving a medical service for which removal of the face mask is necessary. Should the direct care worker need to remove their masks, attempts should be made to ensure a mask is on the patient.  MDHHS strongly encourages regular handwashing and sanitizing surfaces.  Individuals should also wear a mask if a member of the household has been diagnosed with COVID-19.

Q:  **Are there any restrictions on the number of direct care workers who can provide services and supports to one client?**

A:  It is recommended that care managers and agency providers review an individual's care plan to limit the number of different providers assisting an individual.

Additionally, the term "care managers" should be broadly interpreted.  MDHHS realizes that when a direct care worker works for an agency, the person responsible for scheduling direct care workers is often the agency supervisor.  This guidance is not meant to circumvent established lines of authority. One direct care worker serving only one individual is not always possible.  Care managers need to use their best judgement when making these decisions.

NOTE:  If a direct care worker is caring for an individual with COVID-19, it is important that the direct care worker wash their hands and take precautions, such as wearing a mask and gloves, to prevent spreading the virus to others.  Personal protective equipment must be changed after caring for the individual.

Q:  **Does my direct care worker count as a second household per the MDHHS order?**

A:  The MDHHS order prohibits indoor gatherings of no more than 10 persons from more than 2 households.  However, it further states the limitations do not apply to gatherings between an employee and a customer for the purpose of receiving services.  It also states that it does not apply to gatherings for the purpose of medical treatment.  Therefore, direct care workers, who are furnishing authorized services to an individual, do not count toward the 10-person or 2-household limits.

Q:  **How do we maintain a six-foot distance while providing personal care services?**

A:  The MDHHS order states that a six-foot distance from others should be maintained to the extent possible.  There are times when hands on care is needed and it is understood that direct care workers may not be able to maintain this distance.

Q:  **Should direct care workers inquire about an individual's contact with other households?**

A:  It is recommended that the direct care worker call ahead of time to inquire about the exposure the individual may have had to others outside the household.  This will help them assess their risk in entering the individual's household and take proper precautions to protect everyone's safety.

Q:  **Are there any special requirements for direct care workers for contact tracing?**

A:  The MDHHS order states that businesses or operations that provide in-home services must not permit their employees to gather with clients unless the business maintains

accurate appointment records, including date and time of service, name of client, and contact information, to aid with contact tracing.  Direct care workers and their employers should be maintaining this information as a standard business practice, regardless of the MDHHS order.

Michigan also provides a free MI COVID Alert mobile application **MI COVID Alert**.  This anonymous, simple, and no cost mobile app lets users know whether they may have recently been exposed to COVID-19.  MDHHS recommends that direct care workers and individuals receiving services use this application.

Q:  **Where can direct care workers get personal protective equipment (PPE)?**

A:  Home care agencies and employers may provide PPE.  Direct care workers may also check with their local Health and Human Services Agency, health department, or other community agencies.  Individuals, who are Medicaid-eligible and receiving services and supports may ask their health provider if they are eligible for a 30-day prescription for personal PPE such as gloves and masks.  Please see PPE Resources for additional sources of PPE.

**For more information:**

Michigan Department of Health and Human Services Coronavirus Website

Centers for Disease Control COVID-19 Website