



GREATER NEW YORK HEALTH CARE FACILITIES ASSOCIATION

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Memo 20-23

To: Administrator, DNS, Medical Director, Infection Preventionist and QA Committee

From: Mary Gracey-White RN, Director of Regulatory Compliance

Date: July 8, 2020

Re: Respiratory Protection Program

In order to provide information and resources for developing a Respiratory Protection Program that meet OSHA standards, we have developed a resource guide as well as links to sample Respiratory Protection Programs (RPP) that can be used in the Skilled Nursing Facility setting. We have also contacted OSHA for clarification regarding SNFs requiring a RPP. The requirement for initializing a Respiratory Protection Program is the employee use of respirators, including N95s, for specific protective requirements or the establishments mandated use.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, facilities were utilizing N95s when available for direct care staff. The CDC recommends the use of N95s if available to care for COVID positive residents (found [here](#)), especially when performing aerosolized procedures such as suctioning and nebulizer treatments.

As we experienced shortages of PPE during the pandemic crisis, strategies recommended by the CDC for the use of PPE were implemented. The FDA issued Emergency Use Authorization for the use of a variety of masks including N95s that could be used during this time without fit testing. In order to move forward and prepare for any second wave of COVID-19 or other potential pandemics that may be related to aerosol transmissible disease, the CDC has outlined core Infection and Prevention practices that includes the implementation of a Respiratory Protection Program.

OSHA outlined the below regarding a RPP and agreed that the CDC recommendation of utilizing N95s would result in a facility needing to implement a Respiratory Protection Program:

- 1) Employees are potentially exposed while performing high risk procedures on COVID positive patients. Current guidance would require the use of an appropriate respirator and as such, a full Respiratory Protection Program.

2) Employees do not perform high risk procedures, or work with COVID positive patients, but out of an abundance of caution, the employer mandates the use of respirators. Due to the employer mandated use, a full Respiratory Protection Program would be required.

3) Employees do not perform high risk procedures, do not work with or around COVID positive patients, and are considered in the low risk categories published in the various guidelines. Employees wish to voluntarily use a respirator (N95 filtering face piece included) for their personal protection. A full Respiratory Protection Program would NOT be required in this circumstance. The employer would be required to provide the employee with the warnings provided in Appendix D of the OSHA Respiratory Protection Standard 1910.134, found [here](#).

To assist facilities in the implementation of an RPP we are attaching a guidance document that provides links to sample programs as well as resources for online training and fit test kits. Please review the attached with your Medical Director, Director of Nursing, Infection Preventionist, and leadership staff to ensure your facility has the ability to implement an effective RPP. If you need more information or have questions, please contact the Association.