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## COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Control Guidance for Ambulatory Care Settings

Updated: November 10, 2022

The following guidance applies to all Rhode Island outpatient ambulatory care settings where healthcare is delivered and is based on [guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) dated September 23, 2022](#). Ambulatory care settings are broadly defined to mean an outpatient location where healthcare is provided that does not require an overnight stay, including but not limited to, acute care facilities, long-term acute-care facilities, nursing homes, home healthcare, vehicles where healthcare is delivered (e.g., mobile clinics), and outpatient facilities, such as dialysis centers, physician offices, dental offices, and others.

Ambulatory care settings should review the updated guidance and adapt it to their clinical settings.

### Public Health Requirements

Ambulatory care settings should meet all applicable state and federal COVID-19 vaccine requirements, including

- Rhode Island [\[216-RICR-20-15- 7\]](#) “Immunization, Testing, and Health Screening for Health Care Workers” regulation.
- Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services [CMS QSO-23-02](#) vaccination regulations.

### Infection Prevention and Control

Ambulatory care settings should follow best practice for infection prevention and control outlined in CDC’s [Interim Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations for Healthcare Personnel for COVID-19](#). Ambulatory care settings are encouraged to build on to previously accepted standards of infection prevention and control. A key resource for infection prevention and control is [Project Firstline Rhode Island](#).

### Managing Healthcare Personnel with COVID-19 Infection or Exposure

Ambulatory care settings should follow CDC’s [Interim Guidance for Managing Healthcare Personnel \(HCP\) with COVID-19 Infection or Exposure to COVID-19](#).

## Important Considerations for the Delivery of Care

Most patients who are ill, even those with COVID-19-like symptoms, can be cared for by ambulatory care providers. It is the expectation that patients with COVID-19-like illness or influenza-like illness symptoms or respiratory symptoms should not be automatically triaged to an emergency department unless the patient displays acute and urgent symptoms. Customary infection prevention and control practices should be used to safely care for these patients.

- **There is no state or federal requirement to obtain a negative COVID-19 test prior to evaluating a patient in an ambulatory care setting.** Practices should be prepared to evaluate patients with COVID-19-like illness and perform rapid testing, if indicated.
- The Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) strongly recommends that healthcare providers offer on-site COVID-19 testing to their patients for three reasons:
  - Patients value getting COVID-19 testing and advice about treatment from a trusted healthcare professional who knows them and their health history.
  - As we enter year three of the pandemic, COVID-19 diagnosis and management is part of routine care delivery for our patients.
  - If a patient tests positive, they may need to provide formal documentation to schools or their employer while they isolate. This letter, like other forms of medical documentation, are best provided from their primary care provider.
- Practices should
  - Promote staying up to date on COVID-19 vaccines for all patients.
  - Have appropriate procedures and protocols in place for COVID-19 testing, treatment, and vaccination, either onsite or by referral.
  - Consider recommended treatment options for all eligible patients. Find information at RIDOH's [COVID-19 therapeutics](#) webpage.
  - Some of the nation's largest pharmacies are participating in Test to Treat: [click here to view the COVID-19 Therapeutics Locator](#).
- Have protocols in place for patients who may call after a positive result on a COVID-19 self-test and seek clinical guidance.
- Consider telehealth options where feasible. Healthcare delivered remotely via telehealth has been effective during the pandemic and could be considered for certain patients and/or visit types.

## Additional Resources

- [Wear a mask that protects your household from COVID-19](#)
- [Wear a Mask Flyer](#)
- [Communication Resources \(CDC\)](#)
- [Managing Healthcare Operations During COVID-19](#)
- [Guide to Infection Prevention and Control for Outpatient Settings: Minimum Expectations for Safe Care](#)
- [COVID 19 Guidance for Your Community](#)