

PROVIDER MEMO

To: Santa Clara Family Health Plan Providers
From: Quality Improvement Department
Date: October 14, 2026
Subject: HEALTH ADVISORY: Health Officer Order on Masking in Skilled Nursing Facilities; Rescission of Prior Health Order

Dear Provider,

Santa Clara Family Health Plan (SCFHP) would like to notify you of a new active Health Advisory from the County of Santa Clara Public Health Department (SCCPHD).

Infants, pregnant people, older adults, and people with impaired immune systems or chronic medical conditions are at higher risk of severe disease and death during the Winter Respiratory Virus Period. The risk for vulnerable patients in health care settings, especially Skilled Nursing Facilities, remains particularly significant.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the timing and severity of respiratory viruses has continued to evolve and healthcare settings have experienced variable levels of impact to staffing and bed availability. Acute care hospitals and other large healthcare institutions have developed systems to monitor dynamic respiratory virus impacts on healthcare capacity and can adjust preventive masking policies when needed. Skilled Nursing Facilities, however, largely lack a similar degree of infection monitoring and prevention resources.

The new order titled [Health Officer Order on Masking in Skilled Nursing Facilities \(bit.ly/4rZNRww\)](https://bit.ly/4rZNRww), rescinds the prior Health Order for masking during the Winter Respiratory Virus Period and replaces it with an order specific to Skilled Nursing Facilities and provides recommendations for all Healthcare Delivery Facilities for the 2026-2027 Winter Respiratory Virus Period.

Actions required of all Skilled Nursing Facilities:

1. Ensure that, except as otherwise provided in the Health Order, all persons in Patient Care Areas of Skilled Nursing Facilities wear a Face Mask during the Designated Winter Respiratory Virus Season.
2. Comply with all other applicable requirements in the Health Order.

Actions requested of all Healthcare Delivery Facilities:

1. Review and follow recommendations provided by the Health Order, including, but not limited to:
 - a. Monitor internal and local data regarding impact of respiratory viruses.
 - b. Institute internal policies that require all persons to wear a Face Mask in Patient Care Areas during the Designated Winter Respiratory Virus Season or when local and internal data indicate increases in respiratory virus circulation or impact to Healthcare Delivery Facilities.
 - c. Institute internal policies that support compliance with recommended vaccination against respiratory viruses for both staff and patient populations.

Resources:

1. [Preventing spread of respiratory viruses](#) (bit.ly/3VznQs2) (County of Santa Clara Public Health Department)
2. [COVID](#) (bit.ly/3UkDVS1) (County of Santa Clara Public Health Department)
3. [Influenza](#) (bit.ly/4yHUB4M) (County of Santa Clara Public Health Department)
4. [RSV](#) (bit.ly/4BcrOHp) (County of Santa Clara Public Health Department)
5. [Vaccines](#) (bit.ly/4jlmzyG) (County of Santa Clara Public Health Department)

References:

1. [Public Health Orders](#) (bit.ly/4yjiWNo) (County of Santa Clara Public Health Department)
2. [Respiratory virus data](#) (bit.ly/4B2BfZE)(County of Santa Clara Public Health Department)