



A new Part 556 titled COVID-19 Mask Requirement, is added to read as follows:

556.1 Background and intent.

(a) COVID-19 is an unpredictable disease that can cause serious illnesses and death. In response to this increased public health threat, New York must take active steps to prevent and control transmission of COVID-19. The seriousness of the continuing threat and the failure to achieve acceptable vaccination rates through voluntary programs necessitate further action.

556.2 Legal Base.

(a) Section 7.07 of the Mental Hygiene Law charges the Office of Mental Health with the responsibility for seeing that persons with mental illness are provided with care and treatment, and that such care, treatment and rehabilitation is of high quality and effectiveness.

(b) Section 7.09 of the Mental Hygiene Law gives the Commissioner of the Office of Mental Health the power and responsibility to adopt regulations that are necessary and proper to implement matters under the Commissioner's jurisdiction.

(c) Section 31.04 of the Mental Hygiene Law grants the Commissioner of Mental Health the power and responsibility to adopt regulations to effectuate the provisions and purposes of Article 31 of the Mental Hygiene Law, including procedures for the issuance and amendment of operating certificates, and for setting standards of quality and adequacy of facilities.

556.3 Applicability.

(a) This Part applies to:

(1) any provider of services which operates or proposes to operate a facility, or a residential program licensed, certified, designated or funded by the Office of Mental Health.

(2) hospitals, facilities, corrections-based programs, and residential programs operated by the Office of Mental Health.

556.4 Definitions pertaining to this Part.

(a) *Facility* shall mean:

(1) a Hospital as defined hereinafter,

(2) a provider of services which operates or proposes to operate a congregate residential program licensed, certified, or funded by the Office of Mental Health, or

(3) an out-patient program licensed, certified, designated or funded by the Office of Mental Health.

(b) *Hospital* shall mean a hospital named in Mental Hygiene Law section 7.17(b), or operated pursuant to Parts 580, 582, or 590 of this Title, and any provider of services co-located within such hospital campus.

(c) *Staff* shall mean all persons employed or affiliated with a Facility, whether paid or unpaid, including but not limited to employees, corrections-based staff, members of the medical, nursing, and other treatment staff, contract staff, students, and volunteers, who engage in activities such that if they were infected with COVID-19 they could potentially expose patients to the disease.

556.5 Requirements for All Facilities.

(a) Effective immediately, all Programs shall have policies and procedures in place to ensure all staff, visitors and individuals receiving services regardless of vaccination status wear appropriate masks, consistent with any infection control guidance issued by this Office.

(b) As determined by the Commissioner based on COVID-19 incidence and prevalence, as well as any other public health and/or clinical risk factors related to COVID-19 disease spread, all Hospital and Facility staff, contractors, vendors, visitors, patients, residents, clients, and all other individuals who enter the indoor premises of such Hospital or Facility, must wear masks at all times regardless of vaccination status, except when alone in an office or room, or actively eating or drinking.

(c) For purposes of this section face-coverings shall include, but are not limited to, cloth masks, surgical masks, and N-95 respirators that are worn to completely cover a person's nose and mouth.

(d) Face coverings are not required to be worn by:

(1) Children under two years of age,

(2) A person with a disability who cannot wear a mask, or cannot safely wear a mask, for reasons related to the disability, or

(3) A person for whom wearing a mask would create a risk to workplace health, safety, or job duty as determined by an Occupational Health and Safety Administration workplace risk assessment.

556.6 Enforcement.

(a) The Office will enforce the provisions of this Part pursuant to its oversight authority in Mental Hygiene Law Articles 7 and 31.