

COVID-19 Practice Guidance for Licensees and Facilities

Alaska Board of Pharmacy, 11/12/20

The Alaska Board of Pharmacy recognizes the constraints and challenges pharmacies and its personnel have faced during the COVID-19 pandemic. The board has remained steadfast on issuing prompt notices to its licensees during this emergency and is dedicated to its obligation of providing preparedness guidance during this difficult time. As conditions around the pandemic have rapidly evolved, the board has continued to proactively address emerging issues, including those coming from state and federal entities. The governor and Alaska health care authorities have lifted Health Mandate 15, so the board is reaching out to provide guidance for licensees.

At this time, the Board of Pharmacy has prepared this guidance document, which synthesizes information from Health Mandate 15, previous guidance issued by the board, and existing guidance from the CDC and the State Department of Health and Social Services.

This guidance document may not be comprehensive and is not enforceable, but it is driven by the most current evidence-based research. This to be used to support pharmacies and its personnel in continuing to use their professional judgment while continuing to protect patients, limit spread, and navigate the best patient care during this pandemic.

I. Applicability

- This Appendix applies to licensees of the Board of Pharmacy and locations where they are authorized to practice.
- Compliance with licensing and board direction:
 - Nothing in this Appendix or any attachment shall be construed to waive any existing statutory, regulatory, or licensing requirements applicable to providers or businesses operating under this attachment.
 - Scope of practice must still adhere to all provisions of AS 08 and 12 AAC 52, and any applicable state or federal laws.
- Service providers not licensed by the Board of Pharmacy should consult their respective licensing board for additional direction on standards for providing services.
- Business owners and individual providers may opt to require more stringent safety and sanitation measures.

II. Safety Guidelines

The ultimate outcome every licensee should be thinking about is how to maximize distance and maintain a cleaning & disinfecting routine.

- Wash your hands frequently, for at least 20 seconds, with soap and water.
- Use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 70% alcohol.
- Avoid touching your face.
- Maintain, as much as possible, distance between fellow staff members.

- Clean the work area regularly, at least hourly. Use a timer to help remind all staff it's time to wipe down as much as possible, i.e. phones, computers, dispensing areas, cash registers, countertops, etc.
- Keep appropriate distance between customers. Place markers on the floor for customers to stand and guide them.
- Associates should be encouraged to stay home if they're sick. Monitor your staff for temperature or other signs of illness.
- Establish a process for patients you know are immunocompromised or at high risk so they do not have to wait in line. Think of services your pharmacy may be able to offer that you currently don't or methods to minimize customer contact. i.e. provide curbside pick-up, offer delivery, and maximize drive-thru opportunities.
- Make hand sanitizer available to all staff and customers.
- Put up "shields" between the pharmacy and the public to block any immediate contact yet allow the patient and staff to effectively communicate.
- Implement universal use of face coverings, as also recommended by the CDC
 - Patients entering the pharmacy should wear a face covering, regardless of symptoms, unless the patient has underlying health conditions in which wearing a mask would interfere with or worsen their condition
 - Pharmacy personnel should wear a face covering, preferably medical or surgical face masks

III. Vaccinations

The goal should be for pharmacists to return to giving vaccinations safely and effectively, keeping in mind the potential for a COVID vaccine in the future.

- Establish a process for patients to schedule a time for vaccine administration without needing to stand in line OR establish a drive through vaccine service
- Patients should be screened prior to vaccination for potential COVID-19 symptoms.
- All staff and patients should wear masks during the vaccination
- Utilize VacTrAk to ensure all necessary vaccines are discussed
- Attempt to keep interactions to 10 minutes or less.

IV. Point of Care Testing

Follow State of Alaska COVID-19 testing guidance when applicable:

<http://www.dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Epi/id/Pages/COVID-19/testing.aspx>.

<http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Epi/id/SiteAssets/Pages/HumanCoV/AKCOVIDTestingGuidance.pdf>

Strategies should take into consideration the current community transmission.

V. Resources

- The Board of Pharmacy reminds licensees that the conditions under which they provide care should be in accordance with any applicable federal guidelines:

- Early refills of controlled substances: [https://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/GDP/\(DEA-DC-017\)\(DEA065\)%20Early%20RX%20Refill%20-%20OMB%203-20-20%202200%20DAA%20approved.pdf](https://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/GDP/(DEA-DC-017)(DEA065)%20Early%20RX%20Refill%20-%20OMB%203-20-20%202200%20DAA%20approved.pdf)
- Follow recommendations for PPE
 - Facilities should create strategies to conserve PPE <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/ppe-strategy/index.html>
 - Strategies for optimizing PPE: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/ppe-strategy/index.html>
- The Board of Pharmacy also reminds its licensees of additional requirements to improve patient care during this pandemic:
 - Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP): alaska.pmpaware.net
 - PDMP State Resource Page: pdmp.alaska.gov
- The Board of Pharmacy encourages its licensees to keep apprised of the DHSS COVID-19 website for healthcare professionals: <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Epi/id/Pages/COVID-19/default.aspx>
- Other resources:
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/pharmacies.html>