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## WITH STATE OF EMERGENCY END, CONFLUENCE HEALTH ANNOUNCES COVID-19 POLICY CHANGES

**Wenatchee, WA:** With the end of Washington State’s COVID-19 state of emergency order yesterday after Governor Inslee’s announcement, Confluence Health will be updating restrictions and guidelines for their facilities.

“These changes to Confluence Health policy reflect not only the lifting of many of the COVID-19 emergency orders, but a consideration of our status within the pandemic and our ever-growing understanding of how to best confront the threat of COVID-19,” commented Dr. Jason Lake, chief medical officer for Confluence Health. “While we remain vigilant with how we address the ongoing challenges of the pandemic and continue to follow the guidance issued by the Washington State Department of Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), it is important to periodically update guidelines and restrictions as needed.”

There are several changes that will be implemented. While employees will still be posted at the doors to Confluence Health facilities to greet and help those arriving, patients and visitors will no longer be directly questioned about COVID-19 symptoms. Instead, signs posted at the entrances will direct those arriving to self-screen and for visitors to not enter the facilities if they have had been in close contact with someone in the past seven days with COVID-19 or if they have symptoms such as a fever, cough, or other respiratory symptoms. Patients arriving for an appointment should advise the employee at the door if they have these symptoms, a positive test date, or a recent exposure and the employee will help advise the patient on the next steps.

Patients are still encouraged to receive their seasonal flu and COVID-19 vaccinations. While currently there is plenty of availability for flu vaccines for the public through Confluence Health, either through special clinics or during provider visits, at this time COVID-19 vaccination need for both the initial series and boosters is exceeding availability, so patients are encouraged to get their COVID-19 vaccinations from the many other local clinic and pharmacy options available.

Still a statewide requirement for healthcare facilities, masking will continue to be required for all staff and providers, as well as for all visitors and patients, at all Confluence Health facilities. Those who do not have their masks on will be reminded and provided with one at the door as needed, apart from those with chronic respiratory conditions or children under two years of age.

“We are already seeing high numbers of respiratory infections this fall and experts predict a significant flu season,” added Lake. “Since we may also see a rise in COVID-19 this winter, masking remains a key component of decreasing the likelihood that we spread those infections within our facilities.”

For outpatient visits, patients are still encouraged to attend their appointment alone, but will now be permitted to have one person attend with them if needed. For inpatients, the visitation policy will not change and will continue to be limited to two visitors per day. Additionally, all cafeterias will remain closed to the public, though the bistro at Wenatchee Valley Hospital will continue to be available to visitors due to it only serving grab-and-go food without seating.

These changes are scheduled to be implemented as of today, November 1<sup>st</sup>, and are in accordance with Washington State Department of Health guidelines.

## **About Confluence Health**

Confluence Health serves the largest geographic region of any healthcare system in Washington State, covering over 12,000 square miles of Okanogan, Grant, Douglas, and Chelan counties. Confluence is one of only two locally-lead healthcare systems in the state with the purpose of maintaining availability and access to high-quality, cost-effective healthcare services for North Central Washington. The Confluence Health Board of Directors provides governance for Confluence Health, the Clinic, Central Washington Hospital, and Wenatchee Valley Hospital, and includes nine community board members and six physician board members.

## **For More Information**

Katie Grove, *Marketing & Communications Director*

[katharine.grove@ConfluenceHealth.org](mailto:katharine.grove@ConfluenceHealth.org)

509-885-0444

Adam MacDonald, *Corporate Communications Program Manager*

[adam.macdonald@ConfluenceHealth.org](mailto:adam.macdonald@ConfluenceHealth.org)

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