

## Additional CHO advice 21 February 2022

Relevant Order	Theme	Current Order restriction summary	PH Rationale for retaining current position
All	Continue Public Health setting broadly	Retaining baseline public health settings including face mask mandates and vaccine mandates.	Whilst Victoria has experienced the peak of the Omicron wave, the state continues to report high levels of COVID-19 community transmission, with cases currently averaging approximately 7000 per day. As there is ongoing community transmission, it is therefore necessary to maintain some baseline restrictions to limit the impacts on the wider community, including from illness, isolation and quarantine. Measures such as face mask mandates in certain settings and vaccine requirements protect individuals, the wider community and the delivery of healthcare services and therefore remain reasonable public health measures imposed to preserve the health and safety of the community.
Additional Industry Obligations	Continued additional specific obligations on employers and workers in specific industries	Some higher risk industries are required to ensure that workers wear the appropriate level of personal protective equipment (PPE) or a face covering or limit worker movement across different work premises.	Retaining some public health measures for essential workforces remains necessary due to the critical nature of the work that these cohorts undertake. These workforces protect at-risk Victorians, provide essential services and deliver critical resources to the community.  These workers also face an elevated level of risk of contracting the virus due to occupational exposure or due to their work with at-risk persons, therefore warranting additional protective measures to prevent the need for testing and isolating, which not only compromise workforce health and safety, but present significant flow on effects to the community.
Movement and gathering	Continued requirement to wear a face covering indoors	All persons aged 8 and above are required to carry and wear face masks in certain settings	As community transmission of COVID-19 continues to reduce throughout Victoria and in the context of high vaccination coverage, mitigation strategies such as face masks requirements in certain settings can be eased. Given the greater risk of transmission in certain indoor settings and severity of outcomes of transmission in at-risk populations, face mask requirements must remain in place in settings regularly attended or occupied by at-risk individuals. Such settings include hospitals, aged care, disability, health care premises and correctional facilities and in potentially high-risk transmission environments such as public transport, commercial passenger vehicles, airports and aircraft which are accessible to large numbers of individuals. Indoor entertainment events are also higher transmission risk environments where ventilation may be suboptimal; high numbers of patrons are in attendance; and COVIDSafe practices such as physical distancing are harder to apply.

			<p>Maintaining face mask requirements for education settings limits the risk of transmission in these settings and therefore the potential consequences of exposure and infection, which include being required to isolate and the attendant disruptions to education, in addition to the rare risk of severe disease. Further, while severe disease and death due to COVID-19 are rare in children, transmission to others is possible, including those at-risk. Furthermore, the long-term consequences of infection, including of 'long COVID' are not yet well understood. Face masks will remain recommended for the community in indoor settings and for workers in indoor retail settings.</p>
<b>Workplace</b>	Requirements for recordkeeping and use of COVIDSafe Plans.	Specific obligations on employers to assist in reducing the frequency of outbreaks of COVID-19 in Victorian workplaces.	<p>The use of QR code check-in to allow rapid identification of high-risk transmission events is recommended in higher risk settings in the context of returning either to a lower case prevalence phase, or a high case prevalence phase due to an emerging variant, in which QR codes may once again support a more centralised model of TTIQ and to anticipate near-term scenarios such as a seasonal winter wave. This also ensures the infrastructure of the system remains in place should it be required to be rapidly reinstated across a setting if required.</p> <p>Retaining the requirements for COVIDSafe plans supports industries and individuals to maintain a level of responsibility for adherence to COVIDSafe practices which can address health and safety issues arising specifically from COVID-19. This can help workplaces to encourage physical distancing; outline how suspected or confirmed cases might be managed in the workplace; meet requirements or recommendations for face masks and PPE; and adhere to other measures such as optimising ventilation.</p>