



December 20, 2023

Kevin Kavanagh, MD, MS
Board Chairman
Health Watch USA
920 Village Green Avenue
Lexington, Kentucky 40509
Via email: kavanagh.ent@gmail.com

Dear Dr. Kavanagh:

Thank you for your letter to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Director Mandy K. Cohen, MD, MPH, regarding draft guidance for healthcare respiratory protection and infection control and compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. I am responding on behalf of Dr. Cohen.

We appreciate the comments that you and your group have provided. The Healthcare Infection Control Practices Advisory Committee (HICPAC) and its Isolation Precautions Guideline Workgroup are aware of the issues you and others have raised and are considering them in their initial draft of the first section of the updates to the *2007 Isolation Precautions: Preventing Transmission of Infectious Agents in Healthcare Settings* guideline.¹

The workgroup provided the initial draft of the first section to HICPAC at the November 2-3, 2023, public meeting, and the committee voted to submit the partial draft guideline to CDC for review. If approved, CDC will soon post the draft content to the *Federal Register* for public comment during the proposed 60-day comment period. During this time, you will be able to review the full document and provide feedback on the updated section, and we encourage you to do so. In addition to the formal public comment period, CDC is also committed to hosting additional listening sessions with a wide variety of partners and stakeholders as the process moves forward.

Once the public comment period closes, CDC will compile public comments for HICPAC to review first and subsequently share with the workgroup to review and respond to, and the guideline may be revised as appropriate by the workgroup based on public input. The workgroup will present the pre-final draft for HICPAC to discuss and deliberate at the next appropriate public HICPAC meeting. The HICPAC members will then vote on the guideline and recommend the final draft to CDC, if approved. This review and public comment process is in line with standards used by other federal advisory committees.

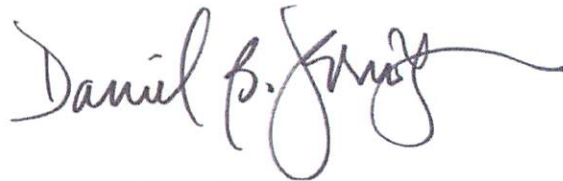
¹ Isolation Precautions: Preventing Transmission of Infectious Agents in Healthcare Settings.
<https://www.cdc.gov/infectioncontrol/pdf/guidelines/isolation-guidelines-H.pdf>

Since February of 2022, a workgroup of HICPAC has been drafting the first section of the guideline update, designed to outline the core concepts of how pathogens spread in healthcare settings and provide high-level summaries of personal protective equipment that healthcare workers can use to prevent or minimize the spread of infections. Subsequent HICPAC work to update additional sections will address the pathogen-specific transmission-based precautions currently appearing in “Appendix A” in the 2007 guideline. Some of the items you mentioned might be beyond the scope of this particular guideline but are contained in other guidance documents from outside groups, like the ASHRAE 170-2021 standard for ventilation in healthcare settings.

CDC has increased the accessibility and transparency of HICPAC meetings, including for the recent November 2023 meeting. This includes making web streams and presentations available through the HICPAC website and working to decrease the time for meeting summaries to be posted. CDC’s HICPAC website has been updated to address questions about the process.^{2,3} CDC will continue to provide updates on the progress of the workgroup and HICPAC discussion on the HICPAC website,⁴ and will publish written comments received during HICPAC meetings. We appreciate your input and look forward to continued dialogue. CDC welcomes feedback from all partners, including the public.

CDC, in conjunction with interagency partners, will continue to consider the best available science, current conditions, and input from various groups to inform our guidelines. Please share a copy of this response with the co-signers of your letter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Daniel B. Jernigan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Daniel Jernigan, MD, MPH
Director, National Center for Emerging and
Zoonotic Infectious Diseases, CDC

² HICPAC Guideline Development Process. <https://www.cdc.gov/hicpac/development-process.html>

³ HICPAC Isolation Precautions Guideline Update blog posts. <https://www.cdc.gov/hicpac/IPGU-Blog-Posts.html>

⁴ <https://www.cdc.gov/hicpac/index.html>