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## V.I. Department of Health Revises Covid-19 Measures Post Global Public Health Emergency

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The V.I. Department of Health has issued an update to the territory's Covid-19 guidance, consequent to the global conclusion of the public health emergency. The revisions encompass regulations for mask-wearing, testing, and signage, in addition to guidance for individuals who have either contracted the virus or been exposed to it.

With the removal of government-issued mandatory masking signs, the updated guidance provides that it will now be at the discretion of each business or entity to decide whether to continue with the mask mandate. Entities choosing to continue the mask mandate are advised to provide their own signage to reflect their individual policies.

The new guidelines also discourage repeat testing for individuals who have previously tested positive for Covid-19. The V.I. Department of Health recommends basing the decision to return to work on the duration of time elapsed since testing positive and the resolution of symptoms.

Testing within congregate settings is left to the discretion of the individual facilities. If they opt to conduct testing, all tests and associated equipment must be procured by the facility itself. The new guidance stresses that referrals should not be made to the emergency departments.

For those who have tested positive for the virus, the department has released detailed advice. For a minimum of five days, such individuals are urged to avoid public settings, isolate from family members, and wear a well-fitting mask when around others. Individuals with no symptoms can end their isolation on the sixth day. Those with symptoms should extend their isolation period until they are fever-free for 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing medication, and their symptoms have improved.

Special caution is extended to individuals who have severe symptoms or weakened immune systems, who are advised to isolate for at least ten days and consult their doctor before ending isolation.

The department has also included guidelines for individuals who have been exposed to the virus. These individuals are urged to wear a mask for ten full days following exposure and to watch for symptoms. If symptoms do emerge, they are instructed to isolate immediately and get tested.

D.O.H. further advised caregivers to take precautionary measures, such as improving airflow in homes, practicing hand hygiene, cleaning thoroughly, avoiding sharing personal household items, and wearing a well-fitted mask when in close proximity with a Covid-19 positive individual.

Emergencies are outlined as having trouble breathing, persistent chest pain or pressure, new confusion, an inability to stay awake, or having pale, gray, or blue-colored skin, lips, or nail beds. Those experiencing these symptoms are advised to seek immediate medical care and notify the operator that they have recently tested positive for Covid-19.