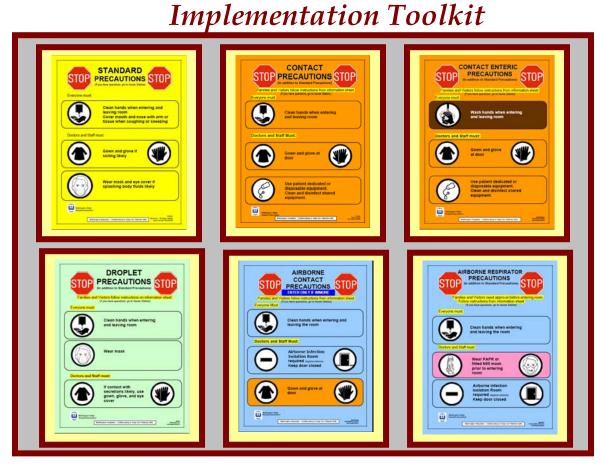


Washington State Hospital Association

Standardization of **Isolation Precaution Signage** in Washington



Washington State Hospital Association

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Washington State Hospital Association (WSHA) produced these materials based on documents from the Arizona Hospital and Healthcare Association and other hospital associations.

Standardization of Isolation Precautions Signage in Washington State



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To download a copy of this toolkit, go to http://www.wsha.org/page.cfm?ID=208



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for leading the way in Washington's quest to standardize
Isolation Precautions Signage.



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We would like to thank the taskforce and participating hospitals that worked on developing the Standardized Isolation Precautions Signage. Each contributed in several ways. Their content expertise, time commitment, continuous suggestions for improvement, and eye for details helped make this work a reality.

Participating hospitals:

Hospital		
Central Washington Hospital		
Columbia Basin Hospital		
Deaconess Medical Center		
Franciscan Health System		
Harrison Medical Center		
Mason General Hospital		
MultiCare Health System		
Naval Hospital		
St. Joseph Hospital- Bellingham		
Sacred Heart Medical Center and Children's Hospital		
Samaritan Hospital		
Seattle Children's		
Sunnyside Community Hospital		
Swedish Health Services		
Valley Medical Center – Renton		
University of Washington Medical Center		
Yakima Regional Medical and Cardiac Center		

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Executive Summary



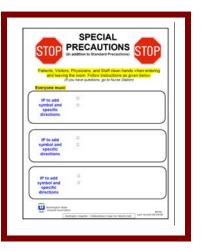














Washington State Hospital Association Isolation Precaution Signage Executive Summary

Washington hospitals provide good care for patients. Yet, we know more needs to be done to make care safer. Across the nation, hospitals are looking for ways to make care safer and less complicated for physicians and staff to deliver.

Instituting standard practices among all hospitals has great potential to reduce the chances of errors created by individual hospital variations. With a large number of physicians and staff working in multiple hospitals, variations among hospitals can create an increased risk for error and add unnecessary complexity and frustration for health caregivers. It also adds a resource burden to hospitals which must spend time educating staff and physicians about the processes unique to their facility. Isolation precaution signage is a place where standardization could have an enormous positive impact.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has identified isolation precautions as one of the top seven strategies in preventing the transmission of methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) and other multidrug-resistant organisms. In late 2007, Governor Gregoire convened a Scientific Panel in Washington to look at reducing the spread of MRSA. The experts raised concerns about the variation in isolation precaution practices in Washington hospitals. WSHA found these concerns were valid through a survey that revealed wide variation in isolation precaution signage between hospitals. The variation makes it more difficult for physicians and staff to comply with this important practice to reduce the spread of infections in hospitals.

At the request of member hospitals through the Safe Table on Eliminating Hospital Acquired Infections, WSHA staff was asked to convene members to standardize isolation signage in Washington hospitals. The standardized isolation precautions signage is a means to convey important safe practices about a patient and communicate the specific actions health care workers and family/visitors must take.



The group was comprised of hospitals of various sizes from across the state. The purpose of the standardization is to:

- Prevent the spread of infections between patients and to staff;
- Support hospitals in meeting CDC guidelines;
- Help patients feel more secure (patients worry when practices are done differently);
- Reduce duplication of work;
- Create consistency enabling physicians and staff to deliver safe care;
- Increase compliance and understanding of consistent expectations; and
- Inform family and visitors what they can do to help prevent the spread of infection.

As isolation precautions have not been standardized nationally, the group based their work off of the CDC guidelines, the successful initiative to standardize precaution signage in Pierce County, and examples from other Washington State hospitals.

The signage that was created follows the guidelines from the CDC. Expert Infection Preventionists (Infection Control Practitioners) in Washington chose to create two categories for contact precautions and two categories for airborne precautions for the following reasons:

- Adding Contact Enteric reinforces the unique interventions needed to prevent the spread of the highly transmittable Clostridium *difficile* and other similar organisms where staff must wash hands with soap and water and potentially clean using a chlorine-based disinfectant. This organism has impacted Washington patients and forced the closure of patient care units in Washington hospitals and long term care facilities.
- Airborne was split into two types of precautions because there is significant difference in the precautions needed to keep staff and patients safe. Tuberculosis requires fitted masks like PAPR or N95. Measles, herpes zoster, and chickenpox do not require these special masks.

The standardized Washington isolation precautions signage has three components:

- Precaution signs for patient rooms;
- Instructions for healthcare workers on the back; and
- Color-coded patient, family, and visitor information sheets.



We felt it was important to have the materials reviewed by national experts. Washington State's standardized signage has been commended and endorsed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC), and the Joint Commission.

The signs were also reviewed by the Washington State Department of Health for regulatory compliance. In addition, input from patients, families, and nursing staff has been incorporated. This work has been supported by the Washington State Nurses Association.

While standardization of isolation precautions signage is voluntary, we hope that all hospitals will implement it. The Washington State Hospital Association is supporting this effort at the request of members who are looking for ways to reduce harm to patients. Hospital leaders believe this process is important because many of our staff and physicians work in multiple hospitals. The Washington State Hospital Association Board has endorsed the uniform signage and encourages Washington hospitals to implement by October 1, 2009.

The types of precautions and colors are:

Type of Precaution	Color		
Standard	Yellow		
Contact	Orange		
Contact Enteric	Orange/Brown Stripe		
Droplet	Green		
Airborne Contact	Blue/Orange Stripe		
Airborne Respirator	Blue/Pink Stripe		
Special Precautions	White		

Note: All precautions are in addition to Standard Precautions which should be used on all patients.

Special Precautions was designed for Infection Preventionists to be able to create additional precautions for highly unusual infections such as a SARS outbreak.

If you have questions, please contact CarolW@wsha.org or (206) 577-1831.