

## APPLICATION FOR MASKING

### To Submit Completed Application Requests:

- If you are a community based provider, fax the request to: Alberta Health Services, Health Information Management: 403-776-0431, OR
- If you are an Alberta Health Services or Covenant Health affiliate, drop off the request to a Registration Desk within an Alberta Health Services or Covenant Health facility.

The mask is usually applied within 3 (three) business days.

Questions? Contact the HIA help desk at 780-427-8089 / Toll free Riteline at 310-0000 / [hiahelpdesk@gov.ab.ca](mailto:hiahelpdesk@gov.ab.ca)

Date of Request (DD/MON/YYYY)	Personal Health Number	Issuing Prov / Terr
LEGAL NAME (Last Name)	(First Name)	(Middle Name)
Preferred Name (If different from above) (Last Name)	(First Name)	(Middle Name)
Date of Birth (DD/MON/YYYY)	Contact Numbers (Primary Number)	

### REQUEST MASKING

I request that my health information be masked so that it is not readily accessible to Authorized Custodians (eg. Alberta Health Services, Covenant Health, physicians, and pharmacists with access to Alberta Netcare) or their affiliates. This masking request will apply to both the Alberta Electronic Health Record (known as Alberta Netcare) and the AHS' provincial Clinical Information System (known as Connect Care). I understand that the requested mask only applies to my health information made available through Alberta Netcare and in Connect Care and that my health information may also reside in other information systems in Alberta. I understand that masking may create some delay in my care. I further understand that my health information may be unmasked with or without my consent when deemed necessary based on six authorized purposes. Reasons for unmasking will be noted by the authorized health services provider, and each unmasking will be logged and subject to auditing.

Signature of Patient / Authorized Representative (as per Section 104 of Health Information Act)

### Authorized Custodian – Complete section A or B below as appropriate

#### A) APPLY MASKING

As an Authorized Custodian, I have reviewed the relevant discussion points in the attached script for discussing masking in Alberta Netcare and Connect Care with the patient. I am aware of no reason or requirement that would prohibit masking the information. I find the requested masking to be in accordance with my professional practice guidelines. I deem it appropriate that masking be applied as requested.

Signature of Authorizing Custodian

Print Name

Custodian's Phone #

Custodian / Affiliate's Organization & Address (at time form completed)

<b>B) REFUSAL TO AUTHORIZE</b>	
I am unable to authorize the masking of this individual's health information accessible through Alberta Netcare and in Connect Care, and have documented my explanation on the reverse side of this form. I will retain this form in the patient's files (in paper or electronic format). <b>DO NOT SUBMIT REFUSALS.</b>	
Signature of Authorizing Custodian	Print Name
Custodian's Phone #	Custodian / Affiliate's Organization & Address (at time form completed)

<b><i>For Office Use Only</i></b>		
Date Received:	Date Set:	Completed by:

## THE AUTHORITY TO MASK

Only authorized custodians who are participating in Alberta Netcare can respond to individuals' requests for masking of their health information. The authorization process outlined in the following document requires that the custodian (or delegate) have the capacity to view the information in Alberta Netcare or Connect Care to make appropriate decisions related to masking.

## DELEGATING THE AUTHORITY TO MASK

Custodians, such as Alberta Health Services, Covenant Health, physicians, and pharmacists, can delegate affiliates who can authorize a masking request within their organizations. Those affiliates must exercise professional judgment and comply with their professional practice standards as outlined in the *Information Exchange Protocol* (IEP) v2.1 and the following guidelines. The Custodian retains responsibility for decisions made by their affiliates to authorize, refuse and rescind masking within the organization.

## SCRIPT FOR DISCUSSING MASKING IN ALBERTA NETCARE AND CONNECT CARE

### **Alberta Netcare and Connect Care**

Alberta Netcare and Connect Care are secure records of an Albertan's key health information. They are designed to provide authorized health services providers across the province access to a patient's health information, such as lab test results, diagnostic imaging reports, medications, allergy information and personal demographic information. Those who access Alberta Netcare and Connect Care are trained in security measures and respect the privacy of health information.

For security purposes, special authorization is required for health services providers to access Alberta Netcare and Connect Care and user access is restricted based on their role and profession. Authorized health services providers are asked for their unique usernames and passwords every time they access Alberta Netcare and/or Connect Care. The security controls utilized for Alberta Netcare and Connect Care are based on legislative requirements, security industry best practices and standards of practice. Any access to Alberta Netcare or Connect Care is logged in an access log. These logs are audited monthly. It is an offence to knowingly collect, use, or disclose health information inappropriately and the individual committing the offence could be subject to fines as well as disciplinary measures within their licensing or professional organizations.

## Masking

For privacy reasons, Albertans have the option of requesting that their health information in Alberta Netcare and Connect Care be "masked".

**In Netcare**, once a request for masking is approved, all information about the individual will be masked except for first and last name, date of birth, gender and personal health number. This is called "Masking". Masking makes accessing patient health information a two-step process. The health services provider must select the category (in a drop-down menu) that legitimately reflects the reason for the unmasking before the health information can be viewed. In Netcare, the six categories are:

- Patient Consent
- Direct Patient Care – Clinical Need
- Medical Emergency
- Public Health Follow-up
- For Authorized Release of Patient Information
- As Required by Law

Unmasking only applies to the health services provider is viewing of the health information for each discrete episode. When the health services provider logs out, or the system is shut down, the mask is reset.

**In Connect Care**, once a request for masking is approved, all information about the individual will be masked except for demographic information, such as first and last name, date of birth, etc.

In order to access masked health information in Connect Care, the health services provider must provide a reason for access and re-enter their credentials. Once a provider has unmasked a patient's record, it can be accessed as appropriate for a period of seven (7) consecutive days. When masking is applied in Connect Care, all of a patient's encounters at AHS facilities will be marked as private, and identifiable patient information will not be accessible at information desks. In Connect Care, a request for masking may also be referred to as a request for Confidential Patient Status or a request for Break-the-Glass (BTG) on the entire patient record.

In both Netcare and Connect Care the unmasking of masked health information is logged and subject to auditing (as are all accesses through Alberta Netcare and Connect Care).

For example, when a family doctor needs to read a patient's lab result or report, they will be required to unmask the patient's health information in order to view it. Individuals whose health information is masked may experience minor delays in receiving treatment and care as their health information is unmasked.

**Notes:**

Masking in Alberta Netcare or Connect Care (specifically the CIS on the Epic platform) does not mask an individual's health information in other electronic clinical information systems used by health services providers in Alberta.

Rescinding the mask is done via the completion of the AUTHORIZATION to RESCIND MASKING form by the individual or Custodian.

STEPS	CUSTODIAN RESPONSIBILITIES
1. Complete an APPLICATION for MASKING form.	The form: APPLICATION for MASKING can be printed from the Alberta Netcare Login page. Once it has been filled out and signed, it can be submitted via secure FAX. Alternatively, the APPLICATION for MASKING form is available electronically in Connect Care and can be filled out, signed and submitted at any Alberta Health Services office during an appointment. It is essentially to inform registration staff that a form has been completed so they can complete the masking of the patient's information.
2. Individual in your care asks that their health information be masked.	The requesting individual is directed to an Authorized Custodian participating in Alberta Netcare with whom they have a current care relationship and who is able to authorize the masking (A participating custodian as defined by the <i>Information Exchange Protocol v2.1</i> ). [May include physicians, pharmacists, nurses, etc. as determined by the Custodian organization.]
3. Meet privately, face-to-face. If individual resides far away, complete process by phone. Fill out form on individual's behalf. Note on form if done by phone.	The recommended best practice is to undertake the following inquiries and discussion in a private, face-to-face meeting. However, if the individual and Custodian are geographically distant, the Custodian can engage in the following discussion by phone provided that the identity of the individual can be verified. The Custodian completes the form for the individual and documents on the form that the request was transacted by telephone.
4. Confirm individual's identity, and status as Authorized Representative, if applicable.	The Custodian ensures that the requested masking would apply to the health information: a: of the individual making the request, or b: of an individual for whom the requesting person is able to act as an <u>authorized representative</u> (as per Section 104 of the <i>Health Information Act</i> ).
5. View record to see if a mask is present. If not, proceed with next step. If mask in place, tell individual.	The Custodian logs onto Alberta Netcare or Connect Care to view the individual's record, or that of the individual represented, and checks for an existing mask. If not present, proceed with the process. If a mask is present, inform the individual.
6. Discuss benefits and risks of masking with individual (see Script above).	The Custodian engages the requesting individual, or authorized representative, in a discussion of the practical benefits and the potential risks of masking health information. This discussion would likely include some information on Alberta Netcare and/or Connect Care and its security features, and the occasions when unmasking may occur without the individual's consent (refer to the Script above).

STEPS	CUSTODIAN RESPONSIBILITIES
7. Consider individual's wishes and other considerations.	<p>The individual's wishes are an important factor in deciding to proceed with the application of a mask. If, after a discussion of risks and benefits, the individual wants to continue the request, the Custodian must also consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a: any consequences of masking to public health and safety</li> <li>b: any other compelling reasons to deny the request to mask</li> <li>c: any relevant professional practice guidelines to which the Custodian may be bound.</li> </ul>
8. Have individual complete applicable portions of the form and sign. Fill out 'Custodian' portions of the form and sign.	<p>If there is no reason to prevent the masking, the Custodian and requesting individual may fill out the APPLICATION for MASKING form.</p>
<p>REFUSAL: Explain the reason for refusing the masking to the individual and also note it on the back of the form. Place form in individual's file (in paper or electronic format). DO NOT FAX REFUSALS.</p>	<p>REFUSAL: If there are reasons to refuse the masking, the Custodian is responsible for explaining the reasons for the denial to the requesting individual. The individual completes the top portion of the form and the Custodian completes the REFUSAL TO AUTHORIZE portion of the form and documents the reason on the back of the form. The original form is then placed on the individual's file in paper or electronic format (depending on the Custodian's preference). DO NOT SUBMIT any REFUSED application forms.</p>
9. Submit form.	<p>Fax to AHS Health Information Management at 403-776-0431, or Submit the APPLICATION for MASKING form in person at an Alberta Health Services (AHS) or Covenant Health facility.</p> <p>Note: Alberta Health Services also applies the technical Masking function on behalf of Alberta Health.</p>
10. Mask set usually within three business days.	<p>Once faxed, the Mask will be applied in Alberta Netcare and in Connect Care usually within three (3) business days. Incomplete or illegible forms may necessitate AHS contacting the requesting individual or the Custodian and may delay the setting of the mask. If the form is completed electronically at an AHS office, the mask can be applied immediately. Remember to advise the registration staff of the completed form so the process can be completed.</p>
STEPS	CUSTODIAN RESPONSIBILITIES
11. Retain original copy on individual's file (paper or scanned).	<p>The form is retained by the Custodian and is kept on the individual's file in paper or electronic format.</p>
	<p>No follow-up notice will be sent to the requesting individual or the Custodian from AHS Health Information Management once the mask has been applied. If the requestor wishes to verify that the mask has been put in place, they should follow up with the Custodian who submitted the form.</p>

**REFERENCE:**

*Alberta Netcare Information Exchange Protocol v2.1 Section 5.1: Masking of Information*

**ALSO SEE:**

AUTHORIZATION TO RESCIND MASKING – Form and Guideline

**NEED MORE HELP?**

- ✧ For further information related to the masking process or for assistance filling out the form, call the HIA Help Desk at 780-427-8089 or email: [hiahelpdesk@gov.ab.ca](mailto:hiahelpdesk@gov.ab.ca)
- ✧ For information about submitting to AHS and the technical application of the mask, email AHS Health Information Management office at [ConnectCare.Confidentiality@albertahealthservices.ca](mailto:ConnectCare.Confidentiality@albertahealthservices.ca).