



Department of Health

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March 11, 2020

DAL: #20-10
Subject: COVID-19 Guidance for Adult Care
Facilities

Dear Adult Care Facility Administrator:

The New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) is providing this guidance regarding precautions and procedures adult care facilities (ACFs) should take to protect and maintain the health and safety of their residents and staff during the ongoing novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

Our priorities remain the health and safety of healthcare workers and our ability to provide and support patient care. Recently, community-wide transmission of COVID-19 has occurred in the United States including NYS, and the number of both Persons Under Investigation (PUIs) and confirmed cases are increasing in NYS. The situation with COVID-19 infections identified in the US continues to evolve and is very rapidly changing.

Symptoms of the virus include fever, cough, shortness of breath, severe lower respiratory infection/acute respiratory distress syndrome and may also include nasal congestion, sore throat, diarrhea and nausea. While some individuals ill with the virus may be asymptomatic or have mild illness, older individuals, particularly those with other underlying health conditions, have shown greater susceptibility to the virus and often experience much more serious illness and outcomes. This potential for more serious illness among older adults, coupled with the communal nature of adult care residential services, represents a risk of outbreak and a substantial challenge for ACFs.

I. Stay Informed

It is expected that the spread of COVID-19 infections in the US will continue. It is essential that all ACF administrators and staff maintain situational awareness about the disease, its signs and symptoms, where cases and outbreaks are occurring and necessary infection control procedures by regularly visiting the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and NYSDOH websites, as well as the NYSDOH Health Commerce System (HCS), to review the most up-to-date information for providers.

Because NYSDOH distributes alerts and advisories through the HCS notification system, it is essential that adult care facilities maintain up to date contact information in the HCS Communications Directory for their administrative leadership to be assured of receiving this information. The following are links to up to date information:

- CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html> and <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/healthcare-facilities/prevent-spread-in-long-term-care-facilities.html>
- NYSDOH: <https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/coronavirus.htm>

- HCS: <https://commerce.health.state.ny.us>

II. ACF Guidance and Requirements

1. Visitors

Visitors to an ACF may introduce COVID-19 infection into the ACF if they are ill as a result of community transmission either internationally or in the US, or if they have had close contact (within 6 feet) to a person(s) with COVID-19. The ACF must have staff available to screen visitors for symptoms or potential exposure to someone with COVID-19.

Under current regulations, an ACF must restrict or prohibit visitors to the ACF, where the operator has reasonable cause to believe such visitors would directly endanger the safety of such residents. Additionally, the operator should also advise residents if any of their visitors were denied access and the reason for that determination. 18 NYCRR §485.14(h),(i). Accordingly, if a potential visitor evidences COVID-19 exposure the visitor shall not be permitted into the ACF. The ACF must maintain documentation supporting such restriction to be presented to the appropriate regional office of NYSDOH upon request.

The ACF should consider modifying visiting hours in order to facilitate monitoring in a situation of community transmission. If the ACF will independently pursue modification to its visiting hours based on COVID-19 community transmission, or if the ACF is ordered to modify visiting hours by the local health department, then the ACF must notify the appropriate regional office of NYSDOH of such change.

ACFs must post signage addressing visitation restrictions at all public entrances, foyers and vestibules leading into the ACF. The English version of the signage to be used is enclosed with this letter and downloadable files with other language translations will be made available on the NYSDOH public website at:

<https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/coronavirus/providers.htm>.

2. Infection Control/PUI Standards

ACF staff are exposed to the general community each day and could become infected with an acute respiratory illness (such as COVID-19, influenza, or respiratory syncytial virus (RSV)) if community transmission of that illness is occurring. It is important that ACFs strictly enforce their illness policies. Staff showing these types of symptoms must not be permitted to remain at work and should not return to work until completely recovered. In accordance with state regulations at 18 NYCRR §487.9(a)(11) and §488.9(a)(8), an ACF must restrict individuals from the facility either as an employer or volunteer, if infected with a communicable disease that might endanger the health of residents.

Staff persons who have been potentially exposed to someone with confirmed COVID-19, or to someone who is a person under investigation (PUI) for COVID-19, will be placed either under *precautionary quarantine* or *mandatory quarantine*, by public health officials, based on the symptoms presented and/or level of risk for having contracted COVID-19. If the staff person is *asymptomatic* but has had a potential exposure to COVID-19, their furlough will last for a period of fourteen (14) days following the exposure. If the staff person is *symptomatic*, their furlough will last for fourteen (14) days following the onset of their symptoms.

If a staff person is found to be ill upon screening, the ACF must send the person home and suggest that they contact their primary care physician immediately. If the ACF has reason to be concerned that the person maybe infected with COVID-19, the ACF must send the person home and contact the NYSDOH.

Daily, frequent cleaning and disinfection of all surfaces must be done with EPA-registered, hospital-grade disinfectant to decrease environmental contamination. Staff must be instructed on the need to follow all manufacturer's instructions.

3. Resident Access to the Community

In areas of high concentrations of positive coronavirus cases, residents should be encouraged to remain at home. If residents access the community and community transmission is recognized in the area where the ACF is located, the ACF must have staff available to screen residents for symptoms or potential exposure to someone with COVID-19.

4. What to do if a Resident is suspected of having a COVID-19 infection:

Residents suspected of infection with COVID-19 should be given a face mask to wear and the facility must immediately contact the NYSDOH. The resident must be isolated in a separate room with the door closed and standard contact and airborne precautions should be enacted. ACF staff attending the PUI if and until they are transferred should follow CDC guidelines (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/infection-control/control-recommendations.html>) for selection, use and disposal of personalized protective equipment and should maintain social distancing of at least six (6) feet from the person.

III. Contact Information

You may contact the NYSDOH Bureau of Healthcare Associated Infections at 518-474-1142 during business hours of the NYSDOH Public Health Duty Office at 1-866-881-2809 evenings, weekends, and holidays.

Questions can be directed to icp@health.ny.gov; or to the toll-free call center at (888) 364-3065.

Your diligence in implementing appropriate measures for COVID-19 preparedness is appreciated.

Sincerely,



Heidi L. Hayes, Acting Director
Division of Adult Care Facility
and Assisted Living Surveillance

Enclosure: Visitation Restrictions Signage - English

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