

Long-Term Care Facilities COVID-19 Advisory Group – Meeting Minutes

MARCH 10, 2021
3:00PM-4:00PM

Review and approval of meeting minutes:

- Reviewed meeting minutes from last meeting – Approved and Seconded.

CMS QSO Memo Release

CMS released guidance this afternoon relaxing visitation restrictions in facilities.

Need to revise the Safe Start Plans to accommodate this.

We need to move as quickly as possible with ongoing vaccination in facilities for staff and residents.

There are decision points that need to be addressed:

Do we want to move away from the x number of cases per 100,000 times 2 weeks metric, back to the county positivity rate? Yes, otherwise we won't be in compliance with the CMS guidance.

CDC also updated guidance today.

DOH needs to check with surveillance unit staff on county positivity rate to see if they were still planning to track that.

CMS data is a week behind.

Nursing facilities are wanting to know if they follow CMS guidance immediately or wait for the state guidance?

The expectation is for consistency in visitation across all settings.

We need to communicate that they should follow the current Safe Start Plans until we get a Governor's Proclamation.

CDC guidance is more general – universal application in health care.

We need a directive that says we are looking at this and to follow the existing guidance for now. This has to move as quickly as possible.

RCS: There also needs to be the understanding that this would be a very abbreviated stakeholder process. We make amendments to the documents and stakeholders get one opportunity to review. We can't labor over it or it will take longer.

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*Please note: Comments expressed by individual stakeholders within these minutes do not necessarily represent the views of the entire advisory group.

The percent positivity is an issue. It depends on if DOH is going to continue to track data this way on the dashboard.

Heat chart reports coming from CMS points to rate per county. DOH has access to HSN heat chart.

Will we get rid of the phases then? There are some areas that are still impacted by phases so we need consistency. There are masking requirements, community visitation, congregate activities, quarantine requirements, etc.

If the quarantine portion goes away, that will be a huge positive for quality of life.

We should address when to quarantine and when not to and visitation in these next updates to the Safe Start docs.

How do we address unvaccinated? Can the 2 groups intermingle? Eat together for example?

This is why following up on the vaccination topic is important. We have to keep vaccinations going for new admissions, new staff, those who declined at first but have changed their mind, etc.

CMS has said nursing facilities can use the county positivity rate or the CMS rate.

“Greater than 70% of residents vaccinated in a facility” is problematic for Adult Family Homes. If there are 6 people in a home and 4 chose to be vaccinated the home is only at 66% vaccination.

Visitors will have to follow certain rules: go directly to resident’s room, social distance, wear a mask, etc.

Facilities will need to update policy around number of visitors allowed per resident and how many visitors they can manage in the facility.

RCS: We will send out a Dear Provider Letter tonight that communicates that we received the memo, we are working on revising the Safe Start plans and to use the existing plans until we send new guidance.

Meanwhile we will get the plans updated and will send them out to stakeholders for review. Get comments from stakeholders by Monday and meet on Monday.

What if we did nursing facility guidance first and then the others? No, we need to put it out all together for consistency.

The proclamation trumps fed law because it's more restrictive. We have to get plans to the Governor's office and the Governor has to amend the proclamation. We need to do this before this weekend because family members want to visit but it is dependent on the Governor releasing the proclamation.

RCS to set up meeting on Thursday 3/11 to update the documents. 8am-11am and then we'll see how we're doing.

Decision points:

Have to look at CDC guidance vs CMS guidance

Have to determine the positivity rate question

Can other programs gain access to the percent positivity rate? How often is it updated? It is published once per week for the two weeks prior to the publishing date. Counties differ in sophistication on getting data.

How does a visitor verify they've been vaccinated? There is no requirement for visitors to be vaccinated or show a test. Staff are not required to be vaccinated.

It would be nice to know what the 70% vaccination rate is based on so we could model it for the smaller facilities. The 70% doesn't include staff, just residents.

Adult Family Homes haven't even received all their first vaccination clinics yet. Inequitable distribution of vaccinations.

We don't have vaccination percentages by facility across settings so how would we know if a facility is at 70% or greater. We would need data and Walgreens and CVS haven't reported that data.

Plan going forward is to address visitation and quarantine in all Safe Start documents. Meeting tomorrow to revise documents.

Agenda for next meeting:

Follow up on today's agenda items.