



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES
Aging and Long-Term Support Administration
PO Box 45600, Olympia, Washington 98504-5600

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**SAFE START RECOMMENDATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS
FOR LONG-TERM CARE SETTINGS**

Dear Provider/Superintendent/Administrator:

In response to requests for recommendations, the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) and the Department of Health (DOH) are presenting the following phased [Safe Start for Long-Term Care](#) for licensed and certified long-term care facilities and agencies. Given the critical importance of limiting COVID-19 exposure in long-term care residential care settings and certified supported living agencies, decisions on relaxing restrictions should be made:

- With careful review of various unique aspects of the different facilities and communities in which they reside;
- In alignment with the Governor's Proclamations; and
- In collaboration with state and local health officials.

This phased approach will help keep residents and clients healthy and safe. Because the pandemic is affecting communities in different ways, DSHS, DOH and the Governor's Office regularly monitor the factors for the Safe Start for Long-Term Care and adjust the Washington plans accordingly.

Safe Start for LTC Requirements:

1. Follow the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Department of Health (DOH), and local health jurisdictions' (LHJs) (when applicable) infection control guidelines to slow COVID-19 spread.
2. Cooperate with the local health officer or their designee in the conduct of an outbreak investigation, including compliance with all recommended or ordered infection prevention measures, testing of staff, and testing of residents and clients.
3. Follow this DSHS and DOH phased Safe Start for Long-Term Care plan which is based on the Governor's Safe Start phased plan.
4. Follow the "[Washington Phased Approach for Modifying Physical Distancing](#)" and Governor Proclamations: [Long-Term Care-Operations and Visitation](#).
5. The LHJ or DOH have the authority to return a facility, agency, or home to more restrictive operations in response to any infectious disease and/or COVID-19 outbreak by imposing non-essential visitor restrictions and services defined by the Governor's [Safe Start for Long Term Care](#).
6. The facility, agency, or home cannot move into the next Safe Start for LTC phase until the Secretary of the Department of Health approves the next Safe Start county phase for the respective county. For example, facilities located in counties in Safe Start Phase 1, cannot move beyond phase 1 of the Safe Start for LTC plan until the county enters Safe Start Phase 2 or greater. The facility, agency, or home must then meet all of the Safe Start for Long-Term Care phase criteria included in these documents before moving forward.

The plan outlines the specific expectations related to the Safe Start for Long-Term Care for facilities and visitation. Long-term care facilities and agencies do not have to start at Phase 1. If the facility, agency, or home meets all criteria to start at a higher phase **and** the county is in a higher phase, they can start at the equivalent phase.

There is no application requirement to the department for the movement from one phase to another phase. Facilities, agencies, and homes will make the determination when they are able to meet all the criteria to move to the next phase.

To determine the COVID transmission rate for your county, we are including the link and is also embedded in each Safe Start for LTC document [COVID 19 Risk Assessment Dashboard](#).

To participate in *COVID-19 Q&A for Long-Term Care Weekly Sessions* presented by the associations, DOH and DSHS, please register [here](#). After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.

The [LTC Ombuds Re-Entry Notification](#) provides facilities and providers with additional information. For information about the DD ombuds resuming visits, see [here](#).

Thank you for your continued commitment to resident and client health and safety. If you have any questions, please send them to RCSPolicy@dshs.wa.gov.

Sincerely,



Candace Goehring, Director
Residential Care Services

DSHS: "Transforming Lives"