



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

October 8, 2020

ALTSA: NH #2020-073
ALTSA: ICF/IID #2020-038

**QSO-20-41-ALL GUIDANCE RELATED TO THE EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS
TESTING REQUIREMENTS-CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 (COVID-19)**

Dear Nursing Facility/Home Administrator and ICF/IID Administrator:

On September 28, 2020, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) issued a memorandum, [QSO-20-41-ALL](#), regarding emergency preparedness testing exemption and guidance in times of a Public Health Emergency.

CMS regulations for emergency preparedness require specific testing exercises be conducted to validate the facility's emergency program. CMS defines the testing exercises required under the emergency preparedness regulations in two categories: 1) Full-scale and individual facility-based functional exercises; and 2) Mock disaster drills, tabletop exercises, or workshops.

During or after an actual emergency, the regulations allow for an exemption to the testing requirements for providers that experience a natural or man-made event requiring activation of their emergency plan. On Friday, March 13, 2020, the President declared a national emergency due to COVID-19. Subsequently many providers and suppliers activated their emergency plans in order to address surge and coordinate response activities.

Facilities that activate their emergency plans are exempt from the next required full-scale community-based or individual facility-based functional exercise. Facilities must be able to demonstrate, through written documentation, that they activated their program due to the emergency.

CMS requires facilities to conduct annually one of the following exercises of their choice: 1) Another full-scale exercise, 2) Individual facility-based functional exercise, 3) Mock disaster drill, 4) Tabletop exercise, or 5) Workshop.

Facilities may need to conduct an exercise of choice following the current Public Health Emergency if they were required to conduct such an exercise this year and did not already do so.

Thank you for your continued commitment to resident health and safety. If you have any questions, please contact Lisa Herke, Nursing Home Policy Program Manager at (509) 209-3088 or lisa.herke@dshs.wa.gov.

Sincerely,

Candace Goehring, Director
Residential Care Services

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