



**STATE OF WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT  
OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES**

*Aging and Long-Term Support Administration PO  
Box 45600, Olympia, Washington 98504-5600*

December 2, 2020

**ALTSA: AFH #2020-066  
ALTSA: ALF #2020-060  
ALTSA: CCRSS #2020-047  
ALTSA: ICF/IID #2020-049  
ALTSA: ESF #2020-048  
ALTSA: NH #2020-092**

**RAPID RESPONSE SHORT-TERM CRISIS STAFFING**

Dear Provider/Administrator/Superintendent:

The Department of Social and Health Services Aging and Long-Term Support Administration is contracting with temporary nurse staffing agencies to provide Rapid Response Crisis Staffing teams located in multiple geographic areas across the state. The intent of establishing these Rapid Response teams is to quickly provide **short-term staffing support to supplement long-term care and developmental disability facilities and agencies experiencing challenges in caring for residents and clients.**

Over the past several months, COVID-19 cases have been on the rise in the community and in long-term care facilities. One symptomatic person in a facility or home may rapidly transmit COVID to several residents or clients and staff in just a few days. As community spread increases, there have been increased incidents of facility staff testing positive for the virus, requiring them to stop work on short notice and quarantine for 14 days. Both of these situations can lead to safety concerns for facility and agency residents, clients and staff.

In response to these types of incidents DSHS requested, and received, Coronavirus Aid Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding to provide short-term nursing and aide service support to facilities across the state. Beginning in early December, DSHS will deploy at least six Rapid Response teams comprised of RNs, LPNs, and CNAs to provide direct nursing and personal care aide support to facilities in the state. Additional teams will be added based on need. There will be **no charge** to the facilities or agencies for use of short-term nursing staff support through this program.

The Rapid Response teams will be located in counties with the highest need based on virus reporting. Currently this includes the following counties: King, Pierce, Snohomish, Clark, Franklin, and Spokane counties. In the event the data shows a need for an additional Rapid Response team in an area or in other areas, these teams may be repositioned to respond to that need.

Providers can request support from a Rapid Response team for one or more of the following reasons:

- Staff or resident/client COVID outbreak that threatens the ability of the facility or agency to meet the ongoing needs of residents or clients.
- Situations where a facility or agency will significantly benefit from short-term respite for

direct nursing and personal care assistance staff; and

- Facilities with a sudden and unexpected nursing and aide staff absences for COVID or other infectious disease related reasons that would threaten the ability to provide care or services to residents or clients.

As requests come in from facilities for short-term nursing support, DSHS will work with the Rapid Response teams to triage requests based on the level of risk to resident/client safety and the Rapid Response team's ability to meet that need. Some facilities will still be directed to look for other options to meet resident care needs including moving residents or clients to COVID+ units, bringing in other available temporary staff, or looking for other facilities to place non-COVID residents to balance resident count with available staffing.

Please work with your staff to be prepared to orient the Rapid Response teams to your facility, agency and residents or clients. These staff are accustomed to responding to temporary assignments, but will need orientation to the residents or clients they are assigned to care for and the operations of your facility or agency. For example medication administration systems, personal care or behavioral health care needs of the residents or clients, emergency response and contact information, and other vital information.

Facilities and agencies that receive staff will be provided contact information for the staff and Rapid Response nurse managers for the contractor. Any questions or concerns regarding the staff or assignments will be directed to the Rapid Response nurse managers.

The department is still working out many of the details on the timing and logistics for implementation of the Rapid Response teams. We will share more information as it becomes available.

#### Program logistics

1. RCS Regional Administrators and the Office Chief for Headquarters Operations will receive and review the Rapid Response agency staffing requests from the facility or agency and communicate those to the Rapid Response nurse managers. These requests will be submitted to an email in box at [rapidresponse@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:rapidresponse@dshs.wa.gov) and need to include all required information to complete the request. This information will be sent to the Rapid Response nurse managers. Here is a link to the [Rapid Response Request form](#) (DSHS 02-716).

The information needed for the Rapid Response staffing includes:

- Name of facility or agency
- Requestor Name
- Requestor email and phone number
- Requestor Position
- Number of residents in the facility or clients assigned to the agency
- If your facility shares ownership or operational management with other facilities in the state or region, has your facility requested backup support from those homes?

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- Has your facility called upon staff in administration (Administrator, Director of Nursing, other department heads) to assist with providing direct care, supervision and non-ADL needs?
  - Has your facility reached out to a staffing agency with no additional staff available?
  - They ask for additional comments and concerns be qualitative added as a response.
2. The Rapid Response nurse managers will receive the request from RCS and contact the facility or agency to discuss the staff availability, staff need and assignment.
  3. DSHS/ALTSA is providing the DSHS Background Check Authorization form for agency staff to complete prior to their assignment to your facility or agency. If a nurse or aide reports to your facility that means they have passed the background check and are licensed or certified in good standing in another state(s).
  4. Facilities may ask for any number of shifts after they have determined that other staffing agencies are unable to meet any or all of their entire staffing needs. The Rapid Response nurse managers will confirm what amount of staff resource is available and when.
  5. The number of times a facility or agency utilizes the Rapid Response staffing is not limited by time or frequency. If there are multiple staffing requests that need to be filled at the same time, RCS will coordinate those requests with the Rapid Response nurse managers. Resources deployed will be based on need regionally and statewide.
  6. Staffing requests will be responded to within 24 hours by the Rapid Response nurse manager verifying receipt with a status update and details regarding staff being deployed.
  7. If a facility or agency does not have adequate PPE to provide to the Rapid Response staff, DSHS will be providing PPE kits, including fit testing for N95 respirators.
  8. Concerns regarding the performance or actions of any of the Rapid Response nurses or aides will be directed to the Rapid Response nurse managers for investigation and any required action.
  9. When nursing staff are assigned to your facility or agency you will receive staffing and agency contact information and instructions.

For Rapid Response staffing questions, contact Kristin Ferrell at [Kristin.ferrell@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:Kristin.ferrell@dshs.wa.gov) or 253-234-6089.

Sincerely,



Candace Goehring, Director  
Residential Care Services

DSHS: "Transforming Lives"