



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

December 23, 2020

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**UPDATES TO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS: OUTBREAK  
DEFINITION AND GUIDANCE FOR TRANSFERS**

Dear Administrator / Provider / Superintendent:

Recently the Washington State Department of Health updated two guidance documents, one related to the definition of an outbreak and one related to transferring residents between long-term care and other healthcare settings. Both of these documents can be found at the following links:

- [Interim COVID-19 Outbreak Definition for Healthcare Settings \(PDF\)](#)
- [Interim Guidance for Long-Term Care: Transferring between Long-Term Care and other Healthcare Settings \(PDF\)](#)

The healthcare setting outbreak definition has been updated to increase the thresholds defining an outbreak in inpatient hospitals, long-term care facilities and agencies, and outpatient healthcare settings. We hope that this change will more accurately identify indications of transmission within a healthcare facility. Please note: [CMS still requires testing](#) of all staff and residents if a single new case of COVID-19 is identified in any healthcare worker or any long-term care facility (LTCF) acquired COVID-19 in a resident and every case of COVID-19 diagnosed in a facility should be reported to their local health jurisdiction (LHJ).

The guidance for transferring between long-term care and other healthcare settings has been updated to emphasize that “testing should not be required prior to transfer of a resident to a LTCF,” and to provide additional guidance and minimum standards for admitting to a LTCF during a LTCF COVID-19 outbreak including:

- Infection prevention policies must be in place and infection prevention expertise available;
- Adequate staffing, PPE, and testing capacity to safely care for residents;
- A designated COVID unit or area, or plans in place for a designated COVID unit or area that can be quickly implemented;
- A plan in place for cohorting residents and staff;
- At least one round of facility-wide testing complete, with all results reported;
- Notifying the resident to be admitted (or guardian/POA) of the COVID status in the facility

December 23, 2020

Page 2

Facilities should continue to collaborate with their LHJ on outbreak response.

Thank you for your continued commitment to resident health and safety. If you have any questions, please contact RCS policy at [RCSpolicy@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:RCSpolicy@dshs.wa.gov).

Sincerely,

*Candace Goehring*

Candace Goehring, Director  
Residential Care Services

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