



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

March 19, 2024

ALTSA: AFH #2024-009
ALTSA: ALF #2024-008
ALTSA: ESF #2024-008
ALTSA: CCRSS #2024-006
ALTSA: NH #2024-012

CHANGE IN COMMUNITY COVID-19 GUIDANCE

Dear Administrator/Provider:

This letter is to inform you that on March 1, 2024, the CDC issued updates and simplified respiratory virus recommendations. This updated guidance is intended for Community Long-term care (LTC) settings. This includes Adult Family Homes (AFH), Assisted Living Facilities (ALF), Enhanced Services Facilities (ESF) and Certified Community Residential Supports & Services (CCRSS). This letter clarifies that there is no change to COVID-19 guidance for the Nursing Home setting.

The updated and simplified CDC community guidance adopts a unified approach for all respiratory viruses (including COVID-19) to limit disease spread. The updated guidance includes core steps and specific sections with additional considerations for those who are at higher risk of severe illness from respiratory viruses.

Recommendations on Core Prevention Steps and Strategies Include:

- **Staying up to date with vaccination** to protect people against serious illness, hospitalization, and death. This includes flu, COVID-19, and RSV if eligible.
- **Practicing good hygiene** by covering coughs and sneezes, washing or sanitizing hands often, and cleaning frequently touched surfaces.
- **Taking steps for cleaner air**, such as bringing in more fresh outside air, purifying indoor air, or gathering outdoors.

Updated Community Guidance for People Who Are Sick With a Respiratory Virus Include:

- **Isolate** - Stay home and away from others when ill.
- **Treat** - For COVID-19 and influenza, treatment is available and can lessen symptoms and lower the risk of severe illness.
- **May return to normal activities when all are true for at least 24 hours:**
 - Symptoms are improving overall, **AND**
 - Fever has been gone without use of a fever-reducing medication.
- **Once normal activities are resumed** - additional prevention strategies for the next 5 days are encouraged to curb disease spread such as:
 - Taking more steps for cleaner air.
 - Enhancing hygiene practices.
 - Wearing a well-fitting mask.
 - Keeping a distance from others, and/or
 - Getting tested for respiratory viruses.

RCS IPC regulatory visits will focus on standard and transmission-based precautions.

Updated forms for AFH, ALF, ESF and CCRSS Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) inspection and investigation can be found on the DSHS forms site.

References:

[CDC updates and simplifies respiratory virus recommendations](#)

[CDC Respiratory Virus Guidance](#)

[Risk Factors for Severe Illness from Respiratory Viruses](#)

- [Older Adults](#)
- [Young Children](#)
- [People with Weakened Immune Systems](#)
- [People with Disabilities](#)
- [Pregnant People](#)

Nursing Home references for COVID-19:

[Interim Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations for Healthcare Personnel During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) Pandemic](#)

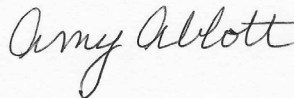
[Interim Guidance for Managing Healthcare Personnel with SARS-CoV-2 Infection or Exposure to SARS-CoV-2](#)

Thank you for your continued commitment to resident health and safety. If you have any questions, please contact your local RCS Field Manager.

OR

If you have any questions, please contact Infection Prevention and Control and Emergency Preparedness Unit ipc.epteam@dshs.wa.gov

Sincerely,



Amy Abbott, Director
Residential Care Services

DSHS: "Transforming Lives"