



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

March 25, 2024

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CRITICAL STAFFING MANAGEMENT IN LONG-TERM CARE SETTINGS UPDATE

Dear Administrator/Provider/Superintendent:

This letter is to notify you of updates to the Critical Staffing Management guidance developed during the COVID-19 pandemic. The guidance was developed in October 2021 the ombuds, provider associations, and RCS. Long-term care (LTC) settings received training and guidance on how to adjust resources along a continuum when faced with critical staffing shortages.

What Has Changed:

The original goal of Critical Staffing Management strategies was to prevent transfers and limit stress on an already strained healthcare system. Updated guidance states that transfers related to an emergency can be utilized and may be preferable to remaining in place and adapting care.

The original Critical Staffing Management training included information on how to access Rapid Response Team (RRT) resources. Updated training does not include RRT access as this resource will no longer be available after May 2024.

Reference to COVID-19 is removed from the Critical Staffing Management guidance and training documents.

What Has Not Changed:

LTC settings are required to have emergency plans in place to address a range of possible emergencies. Emergency plans should include Critical Staffing Management. Emergency plans allow LTC settings to adapt care and referral procedures based on the available resources.

Adult Family Homes [WAC 388-76-10830](#) Emergency and disaster plan—Required.

Assisted Living Facilities [WAC 388-78A-2700](#) Emergency and disaster preparedness (g).

Nursing Homes [WAC 388-97-1740](#) Disaster and emergency preparedness.

Enhanced Services Facilities [WAC 388-107-1600](#) Emergency disaster plan.

Certified Community Residential Supports & Services [WAC 388-101D-0060](#) Policies and procedures.

Intermediate Care Facilities for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities [42 CFR § 483.475](#) - Condition of participation: Emergency preparedness.

LTC settings may activate emergency plans to manage staffing and resources across a continuum when they identify:

- Resources are exceeded by demand or depleted; AND
- Functionally equivalent care is no longer possible to address all requirements; AND

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- Emergency plans are activated in response to an emergent event or disaster.

Emergency Plans and reporting requirements related to activating emergency plans have not changed.

Staffing shortages unrelated to emergent situations or disasters do not constitute an emergency.

When Emergency Plans are Activated, Providers are:

- Encouraged to contact the RCS Field Manager to discuss options for adjusting operations and effectively allocate limited resources.
- Responsible for notifying the Complaint Resolution Unit (CRU) according to program regulatory requirements.

Adult Family Homes [WAC 388-76-10225](#) Reporting requirement.

Assisted Living Facilities [WAC 388-78A-2650](#) Reporting fires and incidents.

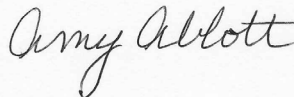
Nursing Homes WAC [388-97-1640](#) Required notification and reporting.

Enhanced Services Facilities WAC [388-107-0610](#) Reporting fires and incidents.

Thank you for your continued commitment to resident health and safety. Please see the documents on the [Residential Care Services Internet page](#) for specific strategies that you may implement into your emergency plans.

If you have any questions, please contact your local RCS Field Manager or Richard Freed, Emergency Preparedness Coordinator, at Richard.Freed@dshs.wa.gov or 360-819-7001.

Sincerely,



Amy Abbott, Director
Residential Care Services

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