



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

June 16, 2020

AMENDED January 11, 2021

**AL TSA: NH #2020-041
COVID 19: REOPENING OF WASHINGTON STATE
AND RESIDENT VISITS TO THE COMMUNITY**

Dear Nursing Facility/Home Administrator:

THIS LETTER IS AMENDED TO MAKE CLEAR THAT LONG-TERM CARE SETTINGS MUST CONTINUE TO OPERATE UNDER THE SAFE START FOR LONG-TERM CARE PLAN.

Effective Monday, January 11, 2021, the Governor's Healthy Washington – Roadmap to Recovery goes into effect. This roadmap outlines a regional recovery approach with every region beginning in Phase 1. While this new roadmap affects many people and places in Washington State, Nursing Homes must continue to operate under the [Safe Start for Long-Term Care Plan](#) under [Governor's Proclamation 20-66](#). Residential Care Services and the Department of Health are finalizing revised Safe Start for Long-Term Care Requirements and Recommendations documents with a planned release and effective date of January 13, 2021.

As Washington State moves toward increasing the availability of services and citizens are able to enjoy more time in the community away from home, residents in long-term care may also want to enjoy those same opportunities. Under resident rights laws and rules, residents are able to participate in activities away from the home if desired or needed. However, with residents leaving the home providers will want to be mindful of infection control and implement specific procedures to follow when a resident returns from an outing.

When a resident plans to leave the facility for a medical appointment, a therapy appointment, an outing, or to work in the community, the facility should consider implementing the following infection control procedures:

- Assist the resident with acquiring any items needed to follow proper infection prevention practices, such as a mask and hand sanitizer;
- Inform the resident about potential risks when going into the community, including the increased risk of exposure to COVID 19 and the increased risk of introducing COVID 19 to the facility upon return;
- If someone is escorting the resident into the community, request they pick the resident up at the front door or curb;
- Inform the person escorting the resident into the community about the potential risks, including the increased risk of exposure to COVID 19 for the resident as well as the increased risk of introducing COVID 19 to the facility upon return;
- Request the person joining the resident in the community to wear a mask at all times while with the resident;
- Request the resident follow universal masking while in the community;
- Request the resident adhere to social distancing practices while in the community;
- Request the resident follow good hand hygiene procedures in the community, including frequent use of alcohol based hand sanitizer when soap and water is not available;

Dear NH Administrator: Reopening WA State and Resident Visits to the Community

June 16, 2020 - AMENDED January 11, 2021

Page 2

- With resident permission, keep a log of resident activities in the community to allow for contact tracing purposes if any community outbreaks occur in businesses or places the resident visited;
- Continue to conduct daily symptom screenings with resident upon their return to the facility;
- Request the resident practice social distancing when out of their room in the facility upon return from the outing;
- Request the resident follow universal masking when outside of their room upon return from the outing;
- If a facility is able, cohorting of residents who come and go from the facility would be recommended.

To find out more about the Safe Start Plan for Long-Term Care and obtain other COVID pandemic information and resources, please visit:

<https://www.dshs.wa.gov/altsa/information-providers-and-long-term-care-professionals>

Contact with the local health jurisdiction (LHJ) regarding any specific recommendations, or for information regarding virus activity in the local community can also help a facility determine any other procedures that they may need to add to the list above. A list of LHJs can be found here:

<https://www.doh.wa.gov/AboutUs/PublicHealthSystem/LocalHealthJurisdictions>

To find out more information about the Governor's Healthy Washington – Roadmap to Recovery "Safe Start Washington" plan, please visit:

<https://www.governor.wa.gov/news-media/inslee-announces-healthy-washington%E2%80%93roadmap-recovery>

Facilities should continue to practice all infection control measures they have implemented. As always, thank you for your continued commitment to resident health and safety. If you have any questions about this letter, please contact Lisa Herke, Nursing Home Program Policy Unit Manager, at (509) 209-3088 or lisa.herke@dshs.wa.gov.

Sincerely,



Candace Goehring, Director
Residential Care Services

DSHS: "Transforming Lives"