



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

February 10, 2022

AL TSA: NH #2022-012

**CLARIFICATION ON NURSING HOME SAFE START FOR LONG-TERM CARE PLAN
VISITATION REQUIREMENTS AND CENTERS FOR MEDICARE AND MEDICAID SERVICES
(CMS) QSO-20-39 REVISED**

Dear Nursing Facility/Home Administrator:

Nursing homes (NH) have been severely impacted by COVID-19, with outbreaks causing high rates of infection, morbidity, and mortality. The vulnerable nature of the NH population combined with the inherent risks of congregate living in a healthcare setting have required multiple interventions to limit COVID-19 exposure and to prevent the spread of COVID-19 within NHs.

The Department of Health and Department of Social and Health Services published the most recent version of the [Safe Start: Long Term Care \(LTC\) COVID Response Plan](#) on October 11, 2021. Among other requirements, this plan establishes specific vaccination and visitation requirements for Washington State NHs.

On November 12, 2021, CMS released [QSO-20-39-NH REVISED](#) to provide updated visitation guidance in NHs due to the increased vaccination rates of staff and residents. The release of the CMS guidance has caused some confusion for providers in the Washington state as it differs from the Safe Start Plan requirements.

To clarify, if there is a difference between state and federal guidance, NHs must follow the more restrictive guidance (Safe Start Plan, page 2). Because of this requirement, providers must follow the October 7, 2021 Safe Start Plan for visitation requirements to reduce the transmission of COVID-19.

Thank you for your continued commitment to resident health and safety. If you have any questions, please contact Molly McClintock, NH Policy Program Manager, at (360) 742-6966 or molly.mcclintock@dshs.wa.gov.

Sincerely,

Mike Anbesse, Director
Residential Care Services

DSHS: "Transforming Lives"