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Guidance for Post-Acute Care Facilities (Skilled Nursing Facility, Nursing Homes, Assisted Living, Long-Term Care) in Response to COVID-19

Nursing homes, skilled nursing facilities, assisted living facilities, and other long-term care facilities can take steps to assess and improve their preparedness for responding to coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The information below can be used as guidance to develop a comprehensive COVID-19 response plan. This document is meant to provide a centralized source of issued guidance to help facilities provide safe and appropriate care for staff and patients.

Preparing Your Facility for COVID-19

- Planning for cases both within your facility, and coming from other facilities

Consult the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) strategies for [Preparing for COVID-19: Long-term Care Facilities, Nursing Homes](#), including the [Preparedness Checklist for Nursing Homes and other Long-Term Care Settings](#).

Updated guidance (CDC, 3-21-20) recommends that nursing homes:

- Restrict all visitation except for certain compassionate care situations, such as end of life situations.
- Restrict nonessential healthcare personnel (including consultant personnel) and volunteers from entering the building.
- Cancel all group activities and communal dining.
- Implement active screening of residents and healthcare personnel (HCP) for fever and respiratory symptoms.
- Conserve personal protective equipment (PPE) for necessary use only.
 - o Use PPE according to CDC [PPE Optimization Strategies](#).
 - o Reduce staff that interact with patients with COVID-19, or other patients requiring isolation, to reduce the amount of PPE required.
- These recommendations supplement CDC's [Interim Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations for Patients with Confirmed Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) or Persons Under Investigation for COVID-19 in Healthcare Settings](#).

If you are a multi-facility system -

- Consider creating a dedicated location (single facility) for all COVID-19 patients requiring Post-Acute Care. This will reduce PPE requirements and nosocomial infection risk.

If you are a single-facility system OR you are unable to dedicate a single facility to this cause

- Consider dedicating specific "units" or "wings" to cohort COVID-19 patients.
- Implement methodologies to limit spread of infection to other patients
 - o Consult influenza preparedness and infection prevention plans for your organization.

CALL your healthcare provider if you feel you have COVID-19 and follow their advice.

Kentucky COVID-19 Hotline 1-800-722-5725

More information: [kycovid19.ky.gov](https://www.kycovid19.ky.gov)

- o Establish **traffic control bundles** within your facility to reduce spread of infection. This can be developed in consultation with Kentucky Department from Public Health's **Healthcare-Associated Infection Prevention Program**.

Facilities should develop (or review existing) plans to mitigate staffing shortages.

Admitting Patients with COVID-19

- Hospital systems will quickly become filled with individuals with COVID-19. The Post-Acute Care **facilities in our area will need to admit patients with COVID-19**. The best thing you can do is to **prepare your facility NOW**.
- The Office of the Inspector General is **NOT recommending** that Post-Acute Care Facilities **deny entry** to COVID-19 patients/residents. Please **accept general admissions** from hospitals as quickly as possible in order to increase hospital bed availability.

If there is high clinical suspicion for COVID-19, however, test results are not available, please treat patient as if they are infected.

- Residents with known or suspected COVID-19 do not need to be placed into an airborne infection isolation room (AIIR) but should ideally be placed in a private room with their own bathroom.
 - o Room sharing might be necessary if there are multiple residents with known or suspected COVID-19 in the facility.
 - o As roommates of symptomatic residents might already be exposed, it is generally not recommended to separate them in this scenario.
- Limit traffic in and out of that room.
- Utilize appropriate PPE according to CDC guidance.
- Notify the Louisville Metro Department of Public Health and Wellness immediately, via **established communicable disease reporting protocols**.
- Follow the **Interim Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations for Patients with Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19 in Healthcare Settings**

Evaluate and Manage HCP with Symptoms of Respiratory Illness

Screen all Health Care Personnel (HCP) at the beginning of their shift for fever and respiratory symptoms.

- Actively take their temperature and document absence of shortness of breath, new or change in cough, and sore throat.
- If HCP develop fever or symptoms of respiratory infection while at work, they should immediately put on a facemask, inform their supervisor, and leave the workplace.
- HCP who work in multiple locations may pose higher risk and should be asked about exposure to facilities with recognized COVID-19 cases.

Implement sick leave policies that are non-punitive, flexible, and consistent with public health policies that allow ill HCP to stay home.

- Remind HCP to stay home when they are ill.
- Consult occupational health on decisions about further evaluation and return to work.

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Evaluate and Manage Residents with Symptoms of Respiratory Infection

Consult the CDC's [Instructions for the Long-Term Care Respiratory Surveillance Line List](#) for a data collection and active monitoring template for both residents and staff during a suspected respiratory illness cluster or outbreak at a nursing home or other LTC facility.

Actively monitor all residents upon admission, and at least daily, for fever and respiratory symptoms (shortness of breath, new or change in cough, and sore throat).

- Ask residents to report if they feel feverish or have symptoms of respiratory infection.
- If positive for fever or symptoms, implement recommended Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) practices practices.
 - o The Louisville Metro Department of Public Health and Wellness should be notified about residents with severe respiratory infection, or a cluster (e.g., >3 residents or HCP with new-onset respiratory symptoms over 72 hours).
 - o Contact the Office of Communicable Disease at 502.574.6677

In general, when caring for residents with **undiagnosed respiratory infection** use Standard, Contact, and Droplet Precautions with eye protection **unless the suspected diagnosis requires Airborne Precautions** (e.g., tuberculosis).

- This includes restricting residents with respiratory infection to their rooms. If they leave the room, residents should wear a facemask (if tolerated) or use tissues to cover their mouth and nose.
- Continue to assess the need for Transmission-Based Precautions as more information about the resident's suspected diagnosis becomes available.
- If you suspect patient in your facility has COVID-19 and testing is not available, please treat the patient as if they are infected (see above).
- Unless they require a higher level of care, do not transfer patients to the hospital just because of the possible COVID-19 diagnosis.

Discharging Patients with COVID-19

Encourage discharge to home when a safe care plan is possible.

Information for family members [caring for someone who has COVID-19](#) is available through the CDC.

PPE Requests

Coordinate PPE needs through local and state public health partners, including Healthcare Emergency Response Association (HERA). PPE is being provided locally in Jefferson County according to [these tiered priorities](#). To request additional PPE [use this form](#).

Hospitals are not able to provide PPE for other facilities.

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Links to Additional Information

- Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) – [Guidance for Infection Control and Prevention of Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) in nursing homes](#)
- Kentucky Association of Health Care Facilities & Kentucky Center for Assisted Living – [regular COVID-19 updates, FAQ's by topic, and links to resources](#)
- Kentucky Department of Public Health (KDPH) - [Guidance for Long-term Care Facilities in response to COVID - 19 and statewide COVID-19 updates](#)
- Louisville Metro Department of Public Health and Wellness (LMPHW) – [Jefferson County specific COVID-19 updates](#)

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