

MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 11, 2020

TO: Long-Term Care Facilities

FROM: Lisa Piercey, MD, MBA, FAAP, Commissioner



SUBJECT: COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus) Guidance for Long-Term Care Facilities

As you know, older persons or people with underlying medical conditions are at increased risk of severe complications from COVID-19 infection. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) have recently issued guidance recommending that nursing facilities screen visitors and staff for symptoms of respiratory infection, international travel to restricted countries, and contact with anyone who has or is suspected to have COVID-19.

Links to these guidance documents are available on-line:

CMS Guidance: <https://www.cms.gov/medicareprovider-enrollment-and-certificationsurvey/certificationgeninfopolicy-and/qso-20-14-nh.pdf>

CDC Guidance: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/healthcare-facilities/prevent-spread-in-long-term-care-facilities.html>

These guidelines contain extensive details and recommendations for long-term care facilities (LTCF). Examples of such recommendations include:

- Visitation should be limited to only those who are essential for the resident's emotional well-being and care (e.g. families of person receiving end-of-life care).
- Restrict non-essential personnel including volunteers and non-essential consultant personnel from entering the building.
- Send letters or emails to families advising them of limitations to visitation, and facilitate use of alternative methods for visitation (e.g., video conferencing) during the next several months.
- Post signs at the entrances to the facility instructing visitors to not enter if they have fever or symptoms of a respiratory infection.
- Screen all healthcare personnel at the beginning of their shift for fever and respiratory symptoms.
- Actively monitor all residents (at least daily) for fever and respiratory symptoms (shortness of breath, new or change in cough, and sore throat).

An extensive amount of information regarding COVID-19, including advice for medical providers, patients, and the general public is available on the websites of the Tennessee Departments of Health (<https://www.tn.gov/health/cedep/ncov.html>) and CDC (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/>). In addition, for general questions the public can contact our hotline between 10am and 10pm (877-857-2945). Questions from medical institutions and medical providers can be directed to (615) 741-7247.